

Testimony to the Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Lucas County Commissioner Lisa Sobecki
HB 96
May 28, 2025

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Lisa Sobecki and I serve as a Commissioner for Lucas County. I previously served as state representative from 2018 to 2022. I'm here to highlight several key provisions we hope the Senate will include or preserve in the state's operating budget—investments that will strengthen our county's infrastructure, improve public safety, and support the health of our residents, young and old.

First, we urge you to include funding for a **dedicated H2Ohio Ash Tree Removal Grant Program**, with a request to add \$20 million for this purpose. In Lucas County—and across Ohio—infestation from the emerald ash borer has left thousands of dead trees near and in our rivers, creeks, and drainage channels. These deadfalls obstruct water flow, increase flooding risk, and make routine ditch maintenance more costly and dangerous. A grant program to assist counties with safe removal of ash debris would directly benefit public safety, environmental quality, and stormwater management. Unfortunately, this provision was not included in the House budget, but we respectfully ask the Senate to consider it a priority.

Second, we thank the House for including language requiring the Department of Medicaid to pursue an **1115 waiver for Medicaid coverage of pre-trial detainees in county jails**, and we strongly urge the Senate to retain this language. Right now, Medicaid is suspended or terminated when someone is jailed pre-trial—before any conviction—placing the full burden of their health care, including mental health and addiction treatment, on counties. Extending Medicaid to cover this population, as already happens in state prisons, would improve care continuity, reduce recidivism, and lessen strain on local budgets.

Next, we support the House's **increase in indigent defense funding** for counties in FY 2026 and FY 2027. As you know, counties have long borne the brunt of these constitutionally required services. The increase in the House budget is a meaningful step toward more equitable state-local cost sharing and we urge the Senate to maintain it.

We also ask for support to **return to the executive's plan for jail construction grants**, which would support Lucas County's long-planned new jail facility. The House budget removed this funding, and instead just re-allocated funds not yet used in the current fiscal year's budget. This plan would support safe, modern, and more efficient facilities, especially for larger urban counties where jails are aging, overcrowded, and increasingly unable to meet modern correctional and health standards. We urge the Senate to restore this funding approach.

We'd also like to highlight the need for strong **cybersecurity investments in our counties**. As cyber threats grow more sophisticated, our counties' digital infrastructure needs protection, which includes our water infrastructure. We are advocating for an increase of the Loyerovernment

Cybersecurity Grant to \$15M in each fiscal year to better support our county and others like it. We also encourage the Senate to maintain or strengthen the Water Systems Cybersecurity Grants and line item.

We also support the **House's Brownfield Remediation Funding Plan**, which has helped communities like ours turn long-blighted sites into new economic opportunities. In Lucas County, brownfield funds have already made redevelopment feasible in neighborhoods that have seen disinvestment for decades.

Finally, we urge the Senate to maintain the **Local Government Fund** proposed by Governor DeWine and upheld by the House. Local governments are frontline service providers and these investments help us deliver everything from emergency response to public health with more stability and predictability.

In closing, Lucas County believes these investments reflect a shared commitment between the state and local governments—to protect public health and safety, preserve the environment, and improve the daily lives of Ohioans. We appreciate your attention to these critical issues and stand ready to partner with you on their implementation.

Thank you, and I'm happy to take any questions.

###

Log Jams throughout Metroparks Toledo in Lucas County, Ohio



Log Jams throughout Metroparks Toledo in Lucas County, Ohio:



Log Jams throughout Metroparks Toledo in Lucas County, Ohio



Howard Run in Hancock County, Ohio:



Riverland and Old Farber in Stark County, Ohio:



Monroe County, Ohio:



South West Elevation

☀ 66°NE (T) ● 39.582827°N, 80.997640°W ±4m ▲ 197m



North Elevation

☀ 195°S (T) ● 39.582811°N, 80.997467°W ±6m ▲ 193m



Dodd Road Bridge Log Jam in Lake County, Ohio:



Bridge Carrying SR 84 Over Grand River in Lake County, Ohio:



Log Jams in Auglaize County, Ohio:





Beaver Creek in Wood County, Ohio:



St. Mary's River in Mercer County, Ohio:



St. Mary's River in Mercer County, Ohio:

