

**Testimony of Morgan R. McIntosh**

Concord Township Trustee, Lake County, Ohio

Before the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

May 7<sup>th</sup> 2025

Chairwoman Manchester, Vice-Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to present written testimony. I submit the following on behalf of our township residents, and township governments like ours across Ohio.

I've proudly served as a Trustee in Concord Township since 2019 and Zoning Commission member for ten years prior. I also represent my community as a board member of the Concord-Painesville Joint Economic Development District, Trustee of Lakeland Community College, and as President of the Lake County Township Association.

Townships are the most direct form of government Ohioans interact with. We pave roads, respond to emergencies, and maintain safety, all while operating on tight, transparent budgets. However, over the last two decades, state-level tax reforms have repeatedly eroded our funding. The elimination of the estate tax, the phase-out of tangible personal property tax, and deep cuts to the Local Government Fund (LGF) have cost Concord Township alone up to \$600,000 annually. These are not abstract numbers. They are the difference between maintaining adequate police, fire, and EMS response or failing to meet that responsibility. Had Concord Township not implemented the JEDD with Painesville City in 2008, the voters of Concord Township would have been presented with additional levies to offset these decreases in funding from the state.

Townships across the state are watching House Bill 96 with cautious interest. The proposed increase in the LGF distribution from 1.70% to 1.75% of the state's General Revenue Fund is a step in the right direction. However, it is important to recognize this increase is modest and does not address the deep cuts townships have already endured.

Townships do not have access to income tax revenues and cannot impose sales taxes. Our primary tools are the LGF and property taxes. Talk of further state tax cuts, including elimination of the income tax, reductions, caps or elimination of property taxes without a stable replacement would again force townships to pursue new local levies to fund essential services. I believe this is the exact opposite result you seek for Ohio taxpayers. Over the last 20 years, reduction of taxes by the state legislature have resulted pressure to increase taxes locally. This has only exasperated the property tax environment we all face together.

Allow me to paint a vivid and disturbing picture to demonstrate this harsh reality. Voters recently passed critical safety levies in Concord and Painesville Townships by only razor-thin margins. If those levies had failed, emergency services would have been severely compromised. These critical levies for basic and essential services are no longer easily approved in our current anti-tax, reduced government environment.

Senators, township government is efficient, responsive, fiscally responsible, and closest to the people. Your township leaders are unable to continue providing essential services if state reforms ignore or undercut our limited funding streams.

I urge this committee to protect the Local Government Fund, avoid destabilizing changes to property tax structures, and ensure that any state-level tax reform is accompanied by long-term, dependable support for local governments.

Thank you for your time, and for your service to the people of Ohio.