

Testimony by Bruce N. Shepas  
Trustee, Austintown Township  
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House Bill 96 Operating Budget  
(Recreational Marijuana, Host Community Fund)  
Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
May 07, 2025

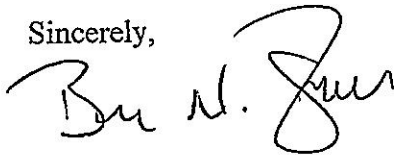
Madam Chief Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and esteemed members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for this opportunity.

I am Bruce Shepas, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, in Austintown, Ohio, located in Mahoning County. I stand before to you today to express our concerns of the changes proposed to the Host Community Fund. Although we appreciate the funding for 5 years, we ask you to consider extending that term to what the original Issue 2 ballot language read in November of 2024. In addition, to be eligible for those funds, the proposed change of the dispensary opening deadline date is June 20, 2025. I implore you to reconsider the date to the end of the calendar year. As a small business owner, I can relate to all the challenges encountered prior to opening. For example, negotiating lease agreements, zoning requirements, county building codes, and fire inspections.

As we all know, property tax dollars are our largest source of township funding. The revenue of this one dispensary we approved within our township is desperately needed to help offset taxpaying dollars. These monies will help support police, fire, EMS and road services, to name a few.

Madam Chief Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and esteemed members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for your time. I would be glad to answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Bruce N. Shepas, Austintown Trustee, Chairman