

## **WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

### **Interested Party Testimony on HB 96**

**Bryan Heck**

**City Manager of Springfield, Ohio**

**May 7, 2025**

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written interested party testimony on behalf of the City of Springfield regarding the State Operating Budget Bill, HB 96. As one of Ohio's key regional hubs, Springfield is home to over 58,000 residents and serves as an economic, cultural, and logistical center for Clark County and the surrounding region.

Springfield appreciates the General Assembly's ongoing commitment to supporting strong, resilient local governments and welcomes this opportunity to share key priorities and concerns as the budget is deliberated.

### **Brownfield Remediation and Site Revitalization Program**

Our city strongly supports the House's \$250 million in funding to continue the Ohio Brownfield Remediation Program and is in support of the plan submitted by the Ohio Land Bank Association. This initiative is vital to our ongoing revitalization efforts, offering a chance to reclaim and transform long-neglected industrial sites into safe, productive spaces that serve our residents and businesses. By addressing environmental contamination, the program not only improves public health and safety, but also opens the door for new development, job creation, and economic growth.

### **Public Safety**

Our city also stands in support of an Ohio Mayors Alliance-led proposal to add a new, dedicated public safety fund that would supplement cities, villages, and townships with funding to support public safety and local first responders. Having a dedicated state fund for public safety and local first responders would address two key needs. These supplemental state funds would be used by municipalities and villages to hire, train, and support local first responders, specifically high-quality firefighters and law enforcement professionals. Second, by tying these funds to the pursuit and completion of the State of Ohio Law Enforcement Standards established through the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board, these state funds will promote best practices and significantly improve professional standards in police departments across Ohio. While grant programs are welcome, cities and police and fire departments need consistent funding to address long-term costs and ongoing needs.

### **Local Government Fund (LGF) Restoration**

Springfield strongly supports efforts to restore and enhance the Local Government Fund. LGF remains a crucial source of flexible funding that allows cities to address core service needs such as public safety, infrastructure, and community development. Since prior reductions in LGF allocations, Springfield and many other communities have faced persistent fiscal constraints,

even as demands on city services grow. We appreciate Governor DeWine for the increase in LGF funding and to the Ohio House for retaining the increase.

### **Infrastructure and Water/Sewer Investments**

Springfield is making critical upgrades to aging water and sewer systems, including mandated improvements to meet state and federal environmental standards. We urge the General Assembly to continue and expand funding for infrastructure programs such as the Ohio BUILDS program and the H2Ohio initiative. Targeted grants and low-interest loans would support Springfield's ability to deliver safe, reliable services and comply with mandates without placing undue financial burdens on ratepayers.

### **Support for Public Safety and Mental Health Services**

Springfield faces growing challenges related to substance use, homelessness, and untreated mental illness. While our police and fire departments work tirelessly, they are increasingly stretched by calls that require coordinated behavioral health responses. We ask the legislature to prioritize funding for community-based mental health services, crisis stabilization centers, and jail diversion programs. Investment in these areas reduces long-term costs and promotes better outcomes for individuals and families. We also are very support of the House-included provision to require the Department of Medicaid to seek a 1115 waiver to allow for pre-trial inmates housed in county jails to be eligible for Medicaid coverage. This would match the coverage for inmates in Ohio's prisons

### **Municipal Autonomy and Home Rule**

Finally, we respectfully ask that the General Assembly preserve the principle of local control and avoid preemption of municipal authority where local governments are best positioned to respond to community needs. Springfield, like many cities, relies on the ability to craft policies that reflect the needs and values of our residents.

We appreciate your consideration of these priorities as you deliberate the operating budget. The City of Springfield stands ready to partner with the State of Ohio to build stronger, healthier, and more vibrant communities across the state.

Thank you for your time and commitment to public service.

Respectfully submitted,

**Bryan Heck**

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