

## Increasing Local Government Funding in Ohio

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Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for taking the time to listen to our concerns, and thank you for the work you do every day to lift up your families, your neighborhoods, and the State of Ohio.

I want to talk today about something that hits close to home—not just in Columbus or Bucyrus, but in towns and cities all across the great state of Ohio like Waynesville, Delaware, Hudson, Upper Arlington, Portsmouth, Dover, and Lenox. I want to talk about Local Government Funding. Because it may not always make headlines, but it matters. It matters when you call 911 and need an ambulance. It matters when there's a fire on your street. It matters when a family needs help in a crisis and a police officer shows up—not just with a badge, but with a sense of duty and compassion.

Right now, Ohio allocates just 1.7% of its general revenue to local governments. Total distributions in 2024 were \$966.9 million—money that goes straight to police, fire, ambulance, road repair, and so much more. But it's not enough. Not when towns like Bucyrus are stretching every dollar to cover the basics.

That's why we're calling on the state to increase that share to 2.5%, though any increase is appreciated. You might ask, "What's the difference?" That change—just 0.8% more—would mean an additional \$455 million for local communities across Ohio. That's real money. That's another police cruiser on patrol. That's faster emergency response. That's safer streets and stronger neighborhoods.

Ohio is sitting on a robust rainy-day fund of nearly 3.9 billion. That's a good thing. It shows fiscal responsibility. But I would like to say: if the people on the ground, the people working overtime at the fire station on aging equipment, or walking a beat in a tough neighborhood, or rushing someone's child to the hospital—if they're telling you it's raining—then it's raining. Now, I'm not saying we take current monies out of the fund to support the LGF especially if it seems we are heading into a recession, but from this budget forward we could allocate more for the LGF and transfer slightly less to a fund that is already sitting at a record high. Or attempt to reallocate 0.8% from another area in the budget.

To make clear—this isn't about wasteful spending on local governments' part. It's about making sure Ohioans tax dollars are working for them at home. It's about safety. It's about fairness.

I know that many families in Bucyrus are already doing more with less. We know you've seen costs rise while wages stay flat. And we know that raising local taxes isn't a solution—it's a burden. Your cities and townships shouldn't have to keep squeezing the same folks who are already feeling squeezed just to keep essential services running. That's not sustainable.

Local governments are on the front lines. They are the ones fielding the phone calls, hearing the pain and the frustration from residents and employees alike. They're trying to do more with less. They're balancing their books while making sure no one falls through the cracks. We're not asking for a handout—we're asking for partnership. For support. For a state government that listens, and responds.

Let's be clear—this isn't about politics. This is about people. It's about making sure every Ohioan, whether they live in a big city or a small town like Bucyrus, has access to the basic protections and services they deserve. I clearly recall, in 2023, sitting at a panel on Local Government Funds, and being amazed on how little of a political divide there was. Democrat or Republican, those on the state level withheld open support for an increase to the LGF, but smaller municipalities, villages, and counties - Republican and Democrat – mayors, auditors, city managers, all seemed to be saying in unison, "We need this. We are struggling." It was a strange sight, seeing party lines drop when help was needed so desperately.

So today, I'm standing with the folks of this community and communities like it across the state like Waynesville, Delaware, Hudson, Upper Arlington, Portsmouth, Dover, and Lenox. I'm asking the Ohio legislature to step up. To raise the Local Government Fund from 1.7% to 2.5%. To give our local heroes the tools they need. And to remember that government works best not from the top down, but from the bottom up.

Thank you, God bless you, and may God bless the people of the State of Ohio.