



William P. DeMora

State Senator
25th Senate District

Committees:

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Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Reynolds, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 76.

This legislation is my favorite kind of bill; it's a simple, common sense, non-partisan solution to a serious problem. I know this is in the judiciary committee, but you don't need a law degree to know that it doesn't make any sense to keep working with contractors that rip off the people. That's what SB 76 is about: making sure that our state government is using taxpayer dollars responsibly and efficiently and cutting off the tap for bad actors who have already shown a disregard for the rules.

In any government procurement process, it's essential to have accountability measures in place. This is where debarment and suspension procedures are supposed to come in. However, currently, we don't have to debar vendors, even if everyone knows they defrauded us! SB 76 is a common-sense reform that will strengthen these procedures by requiring vendors that have defrauded the State to be barred from future contracting opportunities. This bill will not only create an environment of transparency but also will ensure that those who are looking to take advantage of their government contracts are held accountable. It only makes sense that these people are prevented from continuing to do business with the state.

A slap on the wrist and a disapproving look will never be enough to stop these bad actors that are screwing the citizens out of their money, but that is basically what our process is now! SB 76 will be a great first step to making sure taxpayer dollars are being respected and spent the ways they are intended, not being siphoned off the top by some shadowy contractors. It is also important that once we catch these people, we actually hold them responsible with real financial consequences. The current system doesn't go far enough, by changing a may to a shall -which is essentially what this bill does- we can do that.

It's about making sure that state agencies are only working with trustworthy and reliable vendors. It's about protecting Ohioans from those who would take advantage of the system for their own benefit. By removing the chance for bad actors to enter into contracts with the state, we are making the process more effective, more accountable, and more transparent.

This bill is not just about punishing wrongdoing; it's about making sure the state spends every dollar wisely. It's about reducing waste and ensuring that Ohio's resources are protected. Elected officials are held to a higher standard, we have to report our income and any gifts we get. We do that to hold ourselves accountable, we were elected to serve the people not to profit. So why should we expect any less from the companies that do business with the state? They are using the people's money and we need to make sure they are using it wisely.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak on behalf of Senate Bill 76. I'll turn it over to my joint sponsor, Senator Hicks-Hudson, and I'll be happy to answer any questions afterward.