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State Senator Catherine D. Ingram

9th Senate District
136th General Assembly

Sponsor Testimony – Senate Bill 45, Local Government Committee

Chair O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Smith and members of the Local Government Committee thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on SB 45 which seeks to expand eligibility for county sewer discounted rates, charges, or rate reductions. In today's economy, many Ohioans are facing financial challenges, and the rising cost of necessities has made it increasingly difficult for families and individuals to make ends meet. Utility bills, particularly water and sewer rates, have steadily increased, leaving our most vulnerable populations struggling to keep up.

This legislation aims to ease that burden by expanding eligibility for discounted rates to include not only seniors aged 65 and older but also low- and moderate-income individuals and families, as well as those experiencing temporary hardship. Right now, discounted sewer rates are only available to individuals 65 years or older who meet certain eligibility requirements set by local boards. This bill expands the eligibility criteria, offering more flexibility to help those who are facing economic difficulties.

It is important to note that this legislation is permissive, not mandatory. This means that county boards of commissioners would have the authority, but not the obligation, to implement these expanded eligibility requirements. Local governments would retain the discretion to decide how to apply the criteria within their communities, based on what makes the most sense for their residents and their budgets.

This expansion would offer relief to those struggling to pay for essential services. By broadening the definition of eligibility to include low- and moderate-income individuals and families, as defined by the Ohio Housing Finance Agency, this legislation would help ensure that Ohioans facing financial difficulties—whether due to job loss, high living costs, or other hardships—are not left behind.

In these challenging economic times, when many people are living paycheck to paycheck and are forced to make difficult choices between paying bills and buying necessities, it's important that we take steps to help those most in need. This legislation provides the flexibility for counties to offer meaningful assistance to Ohioans who need it the most, without imposing a one-size-fits-all mandate. By allowing local boards to make these decisions, we can ensure that help reaches the right people, in a way that works best for each community

Chair O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Smith and members of the Local Government Committee thank you again for this opportunity. I would be happy to take any questions you may have.