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Chairwoman O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Local Government Committee, my name is Eric Wohlwend, and I have provided housing in Ohio for over 20 years. I appreciate your time in allowing me to testify in support of Senate Bill 118.

In November of last year, I testified to this committee for the last assembly's version of this same bill. Since then nothing has improved.

In just one of the single-family homes I rent out, I received a water bill for \$1,072.20. (Attached.) I never agreed to pay this bill. I did not use any of this water. A tenant signed for the water and agreed to pay the bill. I have attached the bill from the city water company that states "No Owner Signed." The tenant never paid. For about a year I did not even know this bill was continuously unpaid. When I found out, I asked the water company to turn off the water. The water company refused.

This water charge was then attached to my tax bill. (Bill attached.) When I went in to pay my taxes, the treasurer would not accept payment for taxes until the water bill was paid. The water company does not track tenants who owe past due bills & will turn on another service even with an outstanding bill at the 1st home.

The opponents of this bill said we should just raise our deposits. Even if that were legal, in some cities like Cincinnati, they have a limit of 1 month rent on deposits, there are very few tenants who could pay \$3,000 to move into a \$1,000/mo rental house. This completely removes the possibility of housing providers raising deposits to cover tenant utility bills. Still the water companies refuse to charge any deposits for service because they know they can just attach unpaid bills to the owner's taxes.

The best, most efficient & logical thing to do when a customer does not pay their bill is to simply stop their service. The electric company does it. Gas companies do also. Even private water companies stop service when you are a more than a month past due.

We have called the water company and asked them to do this same thing. They asked if the properties were vacant & then said "We are not able to shut off water to anyone." We asked how we could limit our liability. They said there was really no way to limit our liability. The water would not be shut off on a tenant for as long as they lived there. We have made these requests for shut-off multiple times with no success. If you want to hear one of these calls, we made a nice [YouTube video](#) out of it.

This is a completely unjust way to bill for any service. Aqua Ohio has many more customers than any single city in Ohio & they can do their own collections without the threat of putting a lien on an owner's property for a tenant's usage of their water.

I recommend that if the cities cannot turn off water when it delinquent & cannot bill their own customers then those cities should be forced to sell the municipal services to a private company so it does not force rents up even higher or force tax payers to socialize the losses created by the city's inefficiency.

Currently, just in this one city I pulled 3 different bills from the last 2 months. These tenants are still using water that I will be billed for. Being that my property taxes increased more than I increased my rents this year I will have no option other than to raise rents again to absorb these past due bills. That means that every one of the good paying tenants will pay a little more so Milan on Seneca can get away with not paying \$334.88. Brandon on Waugh can

move out without paying the last \$216.84. And, Kathy on Cambridge can decide not to pay \$175.26 of her water bill.

The electric company, gas company and even the water company Aqua Ohio, collect from the tenants who use the utilities. It is only the municipal utilities, who ignore contracts and personal responsibility and attach liens to our properties after they refuse to stop service on past due accounts.

Passing SB 118 will add some accountability to both the tenants and the water companies. No one can provide services for less than their costs and stay in business for long. Without this change in the law I can assure you housing WILL get less affordable in Ohio.

I urge you to pass SB118 to help keep some tenants responsible for their own charges and to help us keep our rental charges down for all of the other good & responsible tenants.

Thank you for your time,
Eric M. Wohlwend
OPHP, NaPHP, RE Agent