



OHIO SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

November 4, 2025

Written Interested Party Testimony House Bill 309

Chair O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Ohio Senate Local Government Committee:

My name is Kent Scarrett, and I serve as Executive Director of the Ohio Municipal League. On behalf of the more than 730 cities and villages we represent, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on House Bill 309.

Municipal leaders share the committee's desire to promote responsible fiscal management at every level of government. We appreciate the bill's intent to ensure accountability and transparency in levy revenues.

Although the bill has been improved with the five-year wait for a county budget commission to act after a local levy is enacted, we remain concerned about provisions that significantly expand the discretionary authority of county budget commissions. These provisions would allow commissions—entities that do not manage day-to-day municipal services—to reduce or deny access to voter-approved revenue based on their own assessments of local fund balances.

Municipalities are fundamentally different from other local taxing jurisdictions, including townships, which are creatures of the state. When cities and villages place levies before voters, those revenues overwhelmingly support core municipal obligations such as police, fire/EMS, streets, water, sewer, and other essential infrastructure. These services protect lives and property, ensure safe mobility, and support economic vitality in every community in Ohio.

That is why we ask that municipalities should be exempt from the provisions in House Bill 309 that empower county budget commissions to override or diminish levy collections approved by municipal voters. The decisions our residents make at the ballot box directly impact their safety and quality of life. Giving another entity the authority to decide what is good for a community—without full accountability to those residents—creates the risk of serious gaps in public health, safety, and infrastructure maintenance.

We fully respect the role county budget commissions play in the broader property-tax system. But they should not have the power to impose their own priorities over those set by municipal voters and elected officials who are closest to the ground, most

knowledgeable about capital and staffing needs, and directly accountable to their constituents.

OML looks forward to continued collaboration with this committee to refine House Bill 309 in a way that preserves fiscal responsibility while protecting municipal authority over critical local services. We respectfully request an exemption for municipalities from these specific decision-making provisions.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing support of strong, safe, and thriving Ohio communities.