



OHIO TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATION

6500 Taylor Road, Ste. A

Blacklick, OH 43004

Phone: (614) 863-0045 Fax: (614) 863-9751

www.OhioTownships.org

**Sub House Bill 309, County Budget Commission
Senate Local Government Committee
Opponent Testimony
November 12, 2025**

Chair O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Local Government Committee, my name is Kyle Brooks, and I am the Director of Governmental Affairs for the Ohio Township Association. On behalf of Ohio's 1,308 townships, thank you for the opportunity to provide written opponent testimony on Substitute House Bill 309, County Budget Commissions.

As you know, property taxes are the main source of revenue for townships in Ohio. Sub. HB 309 would allow a County Budget Commission to reduce millage collection from a political subdivision should they find the collection "unnecessary or excessive." Townships are one of the most transparent forms of local governments and the level of government closest to the people. By law, townships operate under strict statutory limits on debt. Townships also operate under a highly accountable funding structure. Townships rarely have general fund levies. Instead, township funds are dedicated funds, meaning fire levy dollars can only be used for fire purposes, and road levy dollars can only be spent on roads. Residents can trust that their tax dollars are being used exactly as they were approved at the ballot box. If a township wishes to purchase a fire truck, snowplow, or ambulance, it must save over time to afford that equipment.

While we appreciate the inclusion of a required public hearing in the bill, the Ohio Township Association remains concerned that the County Budget Commission may not fully understand the day-to-day operations of townships. The Commission has no statutory obligation to consider the wants or needs of a township when reviewing local budgets. A township may be responsibly saving funds for a new fire station, yet the County Budget Commission could still decide those reserves are "unnecessary" and reduce the township's levy authority.

The OTA recognizes that the bill has improved through the committee process. Provisions such as the five-year waiting period before a reduction can occur and the definition of "unnecessary and excessive" represent positive steps forward. However, even with these changes, the OTA remains opposed to expanding the authority of County Budget Commissions.

Although members of the Commission are elected officials, granting a three-member body the power to overturn the will of township voters undermines the traditional democratic process. In fact, the Commission would not even be required to act unanimously to make such a decision. We also foresee these newly elected seats becoming political races centered around promises to "lower tax rates" regardless of how such actions would affect critical local services.

It is important to note that in the November 2025 election, all township levies passed at an 89% rate statewide, with renewal levies passing at a 99% rate. Replacement levies, which the General Assembly eliminated earlier this year in HB 96, the State Operating Budget passed at a 92% rate. These results demonstrate strong public trust in how townships manage taxpayer dollars and a clear recognition that residents expect and value their local services.

Thank you for considering our position. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or OTA Executive Director Heidi M. Fought at 614-863-0045.

Sincerely,



Kyle A. Brooks
Director of Governmental Affairs