OHIO REAL ESTATE INVESTORS ASSOCIATION

Ohio Senate Local Government Committee
Proponent Testimony for SB 118
Anna Mills- President of Toledo REIA
Housing Provider

Good Morning Chairwoman O'Brien, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the committee. Thank you for your time to speak in favor of the amended SB118.

My name is Anna Mills, I'm a 77yr old housing provider from Toledo and I have proudly rented affordable properties for more than 48 years. I spoke to you about this issue last spring and told you about the outstanding water bills my tenants have on some of my properties. I have five at $1500, five at $2,000+, five at $3,500, two at $5500, and one over $19,000! Since that time, very little has changed. The tenants have continued to pay their rent but not their water bills. Toledo Water has continued to provide water to the users despite the delinquency and never turned off service. And the totals have continued to increase.

Instead, Toledo put them in city programs like 'Water Forgiveness' that cleared outstanding bills with 1 yr of good payments. This went on for 2nd and 3rd years with the bills doubling and tripling instead of paying off. And now there's' Promise Pay' that also is letting the bills get higher and higher instead of decreasing each month.

The city of Toledo finally took notice and estimates over $50 million dollars in unpaid water bills! They say they are going to start collecting, so now I'm afraid I will really be stuck owing all this money back to the water company for service I didn't contract for and water I didn't use.

When residents are not made to pay for their usage, any concept of conservancy goes right out the window. Leaks and problems are reported less frequently. Faucets and toilets are allowed to run. Hoses are kept on for hours. And then of course, there are the intentional misuses of the utility. What costs nothing to them, gets wasted. If the water is free, the faucet runs free.

Tenants already pay for gas, electric, and internet service directly to the provider. They use them solely so not to be turned off. Collection is easy when users need them turned on in the next house! Municipal water should be no different. The amended version of SB118 would allow the contract, service and relationship to stay between the municipal utility companies and their direct customers.

Please pass SB118 out of committee and move it to the full house for a vote. Let me get back to focusing on what I do best-providing clean, safe, and affordable housing – not chasing down water bills I can't control.

Thank You for your time.