



Mid-Ohio Regional
Planning Commission

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Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
Interested Party Testimony – House Bill 130
Ohio House State Government Committee
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Chairman Maag, Ranking Member Gerberry and members of the House State Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the benefits and importance of House Bill 130, which pertains to advancing data sharing by public agencies and enabling online access to it.

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, where I am pleased to serve as Director of Data and Mapping, is a voluntary association of more than 60 local governments and regional organizations in the 15-county Columbus Region. Also known as MORPC, we are both a governmental entity and a non-profit organization. Our focus is on providing services, solutions, programs, planning, and funding for our local communities and other regional partners. In recent years, we have also prioritized assisting our local governments in exploring new ways to share services and create new efficiencies.

With data collection and analysis being a key component of what we do, we are continually positioning MORPC to serve as an information hub for the Columbus Region, providing demographics, maps, and tools to inform decision making. An example of this is the Regional Data Task Force that we convened to recommend ways to simplify access to data, thereby enabling analysts to get to the heart of issues more quickly, rather than spending valuable time to simply get information together.

I am sharing information about the work that MORPC performs with data to emphasize that the concepts laid forth in the Representatives Duffey's and Hagan's bill for coordinated, managed, and accessible information are prevalent at all levels of government.

In addition, MORPC recognizes that 'data' is a generic term, but the practice of accessing and sharing data is a technical enterprise. If House Bill 130 is enacted, many small communities may seek assistance in making their information available. We applaud the forethought included in House Bill 130 to provide some financial assistance toward this end, as well as to examine best practices through the DataOhio Board.

Data allows communities to identify strengths and weaknesses in their business practices, open paths to new opportunities, and benchmark themselves against best practices. While it might seem obvious that communities could, should, or do put their data online, many do not have the technical capability to do so. They may lack the capacity to structure their data for uploading or the knowledge of how to do it.

Furthermore, data comes in many forms. It might be reports, charts, maps, graphs, pictures or videos, and they will need to sift through the information they have to set priorities. This information is not only beneficial to the government entities themselves, but to the individuals they serve.

We believe that the ideas in House Bill 130 mirror initiatives happening right now at the regional level and that similar activities sanctioned at the state level will serve to anchor and provide guidance for data sharing among state, regional, and local agencies.

While MORPC is withholding official support from House Bill 130 due to the portion that addresses the uniform accounting procedures – only because our local government members have their own preferences on the best way to perform these functions and MORPC has limited expertise in it – we applaud the efforts of Representatives Duffey and Hagan to continue to bring the topic of open data sharing to the forefront through their legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss House Bill 130. I am happy to answer any questions that you might have.