



**Representative Lisa Sobecki
House District 45**

House Bill (H.B.) 43: Permit Public Bodies to Have Remote Meetings

Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony today in support of House Bill 43, which would permit public bodies to have remote meetings beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, with my joint sponsor Rep. Jim Hoops.

It has been often said that some of the world's greatest innovations have come about during a time of crises, and another example of that is here in Ohio with remote meetings for public bodies and local governments. In March 2020, at the request of local governments in Northwest Ohio, I filed House Bill 557, which was a permissive piece of legislation to allow remote meetings during a public health crisis. The same concept was then incorporated into the omnibus coronavirus relief package, House Bill 197. Since then I have heard from different levels of local governments across Northwest Ohio about how critical it is to be able to have virtual meeting during the pandemic, and many of the conversations then lead to what is the next logical step: making the permissive authority to have virtual and remote meetings permanent beyond COVID-19.

House Bill 43 extends the current framework allowing for virtual meetings on an ongoing permanent basis. It requires the same requirements for any public body they already must follow and is completely permissive for local governments and public bodies. What came out as a necessity, is something that will permit our local governments and other public entities to take full advantage of emerging technologies.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 43. I will be happy to answer any questions there may be following remarks by my joint sponsor.