



Opponent Testimony on House Bill 519
Delivered by
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Thank you, Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Riedel, and Ranking Member Sobecki for allowing me to testify today on House Bill 519. I have served as the Finance Director for the City of Springfield for over 15 years and am testifying today to share our concerns with this legislation. While perhaps well-intended, House Bill 519 could have serious consequences for cities and municipalities across Ohio, which is why I am testifying today as an opponent.

Often, taxpayers may not know that they are required by local law or ordinance to file a return with the city. Under the current draft of this bill, the City of Springfield would be prevented from applying late fees to certain taxpayers who are delinquent in filing their taxes. Further, the bill would take away the ability of tax administrators to communicate with taxpayers through delinquency notices and reminders that a filing has not been received. In sum, this bill will prevent our city from exercising compliance measures within our city's tax regulations as we try to comply with local, state, and federal law. Further, if a city like Springfield were to send compliance notice to a taxpayer in error, the city would be potentially liable for the costs associated with litigation.

I have read the testimony of proponents of this legislation who have experienced isolated issues in some municipalities in Ohio. Several of these situations are isolated and can often be corrected when the city and the taxpayer work together to find a solution. However, a blanket statewide policy like this may inadvertently impact a city like Springfield, who is potentially trying to recover money that is actually due to the city.

Any notices sent by municipalities as a reminder to residents that they could be out of compliance with local, state or federal law should not be something we are prevented from doing. Our office, like the offices of many of my colleagues throughout Ohio, are doing the best we can to ensure timely and accurate compliance with the law. As Finance Director, I have the ability and latitude to abate penalties and/or interest in certain circumstances. Where there are instances as some of the proponents have demonstrated, where a taxpayer is genuinely unaware of their filing requirements, a penalty can be -and often is- abated.

For your consideration, we would hope that you would be willing to hold an interested party meeting with local governments across Ohio so we can work with you to find language changes that would prevent this situation from happening again, without having a blanket policy that may have unintended consequences.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.