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**Committees:**

- Judiciary – *Ranking Minority Member*
- Veterans & Public Safety – *Ranking Minority Member*
- Government Oversight and Reform
- Health
- Insurance

**S.B. 180 - Expand eligibility for county sewer discounted rates**  
**Sponsor Testimony by Senator Cecil Thomas**  
**Energy And Public Utilities Committee**  
**June 8, 2021**

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Good morning Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 180, which would expand eligibility for discounted sewer rates.

First, I'd like to start off with a bit of context. Despite the name, the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (MSD) is a county sewer district as defined under Section 6117 of the Ohio Revised Code. It serves all of Hamilton County and not just Cincinnati. In 2004, MSD entered into a consent decree with the EPA to make large improvements to the almost-100 year old system.

The costs of those improvements have mostly fallen to taxpayers in the form of higher rates. Since 2000, sewer bills have risen approximately 234%. And while it is understandable that rates would have to rise in order to pay for the improvements, the county is limited by Ohio law as to who is eligible for discounted rates. Currently, county commissioners are permitted to create a discounted rate program only for those 65 or older.

My bill seeks to add two more categories:

- 1) low and moderate income persons
- 2) those experiencing temporary hardship

I want to stress that this language continues to make this program permissive. County commissioners would still have wide authority to create a program that works for their county or no program at all if they so choose.

I don't think I need to go into great detail about what we've all experienced in the past year and a half of a global pandemic. But it has really brought to the forefront how fragile things can be when living paycheck to paycheck. I believe this bill will help people continue to pay their bills and put food on their table. Even if it's only a small amount, it can make a world of difference.

Thank you and I am happy to answer questions.