

Chairman Dolan and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 110 in regard to Morgan County.

My name is Kate Dugan, I am a resident of Morgan County and the mother of 3 young children. I come to you today concerned about the future of my children and the community where we live.

Morgan County is a beautiful area and front porch to the great outdoors. My children are able to embrace the outdoors and experience nature in their own back yard every day. This is due to the peaceful rural landscape we live in and lack of broadband infrastructure. Minimal broadband means they don't have the option to spend time on video games, surfing the internet or researching topics for school. As a parent who works from home, it creates challenges that many communities haven't faced in over a decade. Sending a simple email or power point deck, results in a trip to town. Our close-knit community and our residents are resourceful & work together for the greater good, local businesses who have high speed internet allow others to use it and my neighbors with high speed internet, share their WIFI passwords so I can simply pull in the driveway when I must respond to emails. But, I am one of the lucky ones who has the opportunity to work from home, my husband commuted the hour and 45 minutes each way to Columbus for work for almost 15 years. Our home is over 40 minutes to the closest Walmart, and 45 minutes from a hospital. We choose to live in this community and I embrace my children growing up here.

Struggles associated with living in a rural area are to be expected, it is my choice to live here, however many residents don't have opportunities to move elsewhere. Our community has learned to operate on less, but the loss of property tax revenue due to the sale of AEP land, will add even more stress to our already underserved community.

Again, I come to you today as a parent concerned about the future of our schools and safety of children in our underserved area. AEP Property contributed an estimated total tax revenue of \$446,769 to Morgan county, resulting in a loss of \$269,514 in school funding.

While the sale of this property brings continued outdoor recreation opportunities to the state of Ohio and our community. The cost to our schools was unexpected and damaging. Even with the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program our school system will have around \$205,000 less to work with each and every year, due to this tax revenue loss. Morgan County has one school district, which is made up of 3 elementary schools, 1 junior high and 1 high school. School busses in our district travel a total over 3300 miles every single day, last year it was closer to 3800 miles per day. A reduction of over \$200,000 dollars per year is almost 4% of the total operating budget for our school, its equivalent to 4 teachers' salaries or 2 new school buses. Busses whose lengthy daily commutes involve navigating rough roads including dirt and gravel terrain, and long excursions from point A to point B.

The county has 1 EMS service and occasionally only 1 paramedic available to serve the entire county. Five squads are in the fleet, but staff shortages, mean they are never operating at the same time. These services are already stretched thin, and while I embrace the new ODNR parks and the opportunity for others to experience Morgan County, it will increase the burden on Emergency Medical Services, Fire and Law Enforcement. I fear for the day when a family member or a neighbor requires EMS assistance, which isn't available due to the large territory, increased visitors to our area and decreased operating budget.

Senator Schaffer is trying to secure funding for Morgan County's School District, affected Townships, Sheriff's Office, Board of Developmental Disabilities and other levy funded agencies, including Fire & EMS, to account for the property tax losses due to the AEP property being bought by the State of Ohio. To date over 30,000 acres have been purchased by the state, with an additional purchase coming soon. This is another example of the inequities in rural Ohio. Communities reliant on levy dollars to fund public systems will continue to lose ground when such a large portion generates NO PROPERTY TAX, in perpetuity.

To put this land mass in perspective, 30,000 acres is equivalent to Worthington, Westerville & Dublin all becoming park land.

I urge your committee to support Senator Schaffer's request and find additional opportunities to support Morgan County, an area which will provide a recreational outlet to residents of all Ohio districts at the cost of my children's education and potentially jeopardize the well-being of our citizens.

Thank you once again, Chairman Dolan and the members of the committee, for the opportunity to present this issue to you today. I will be glad to answer any questions at this time.