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Bill Harris
Chairman

Billie Johnson
President /CEO

February 25, 2021

Senator Stephanie Kunze
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square
1st Floor
Columbus, OH 42315

Dear Senator Kunze:

The **Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio** is writing in support of HB74 and the language that would allow for majority consent of the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority member jurisdictions to allow Lucas County to join the system.

Transportation remains the number one issue older adults identify as a need when our agency polls our region every five years. Additionally 47% of para-transit passengers on TARTA's TARPS, are seniors who rely on public transit for their basic needs to shop, go to the pharmacy, doctor, visit family and friends along with attending their place of worship. 60% of all public transportation is for members of the community to get to work as well. Many seniors, 60 years of age and older, still work and rely on public transportation to get to work. TARTA donates bus passes for our seniors to get to the daily congregate meal sites at our senior centers as well in Lucas County. Because the need for older adults is so great, our agency matched federal 5310 funds to restore Sunday and Holiday paratransit in April 2019 in addition to other stakeholders when TARTA was forced to make cuts due to budget constraints. This is not something our agency can sustain on a long-term basis.

We need more transportation funds in Lucas County. The small change in the language from "unanimous" to "majority" vote for transportation jurisdictions would give our senior residents the opportunity to decide if they want a 0.5 sales tax which could bring in as much as \$27 million from the current \$13 million to adequately fund and modernize transportation in our area. A sales tax brings in more money as everyone in household, renters, and visitors all contribute, instead of just property owners. The senior population is growing, thus the transportation need as well.

We fully support HB74 and hope you will obtain enough votes for passage of this transportation amendment.

Sincerely,

Bill Harris
Bill Harris
Board Chairman

Billie Johnson
Billie Johnson
President/CEO



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