

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Williams, Members of the Ways and Means Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on H.B. 126.

I am Patrick Bravo, Executive Director of Summit County Land Bank. The Summit County Land Bank supports neighborhood and community reinvestment and economic development efforts through the acquisition, rehabilitation and reutilization of property in Summit County to revitalize neighborhoods, stabilize property values, reduce values, reduce blight, and improve the quality of life in the community. Additionally, I am a Board of Education member for Akron Public Schools.

APS files increase complaints as to commercial property to make up the loss of revenue from decrease complaints. APS files counter-complaints to protect existing revenue. Over an economic cycle, the loss and gain of revenue from commercial decrease and increase complaints offset each other. Our ability to manage local property taxes directly impacts our funding and the need to secure additional resources from the voters and the General Assembly.

H.B. 126 is **NOT** the compromise Bill passed by the Senate at the end of December, 2020, with H.B. 75 through the leadership of Senator Manning. H.B. 126 is **NOT** the compromise Bill agreed to on December 7, 2018, at an Interested Parties meeting at the Statehouse on H.B. 343. Senator John Eklund, the Chair of the Senate Ways & Means Committee lead the meeting attended by the Bill's sponsor Rep. Derek Merrin along with lobbyists and attorneys from various educational, governmental and business groups. There was an open discussion among the parties with compromises among the participants. Rep. Merrin conveyed to the participants his interest in a compromise Bill. Senator Eklund ascertained Rep. Merrin's approval for any changes in the Bill. On December 13, 2018, the Senate Ways and Means Committee passed H.B. 343 based on the compromises agreed to by the sponsor and Interested Parties.

The compromise legislation addresses the concerns of the proponents that the elected board of education is aware of and approved the filing of increase complaints.

H.B. 126 largely reverts to the original H.B. 343 and H.B. 75 introduced in the two prior House sessions yet later amended by the Senate.

First, there is a requirement in H.B. 126 which was not included in both compromise Bills for a board of education to approve the filing of a counter-complaint filed in response to a taxpayer-initiated decrease complaint. A board of education filing a counter-complaint is responding to the taxpayer initiated complaint to request the Board of Revision to retain the existing value and attend the hearing. H.B. 126 creates unnecessary requirements for a board of education before filing a counter-complaint. In the 30 day time period provided under law to file a counter-complaint, a board of education must receive the complaints, review the complaints, prepare a notice letter to the taxpayer for each complaint, serve by certified mail the notice letter at least 14 days in advance of a Board meeting to approve the filing of a counter-complaint, and prepare and file counter-complaint. In the example attached complaint filed a commercial taxpayer the single property comprises 101 parcels. In addition to providing notice to

the complainant at the tax mailing address set forth by the complainant on the complaint, the School Board under H.B. 126 will have to send 101 notices by certified letters to the address of each parcel. The "compromise Bill" eliminated the new requirements as to counter-complaint wherein the taxpayer initiated the complaint. Any notice requirement should be limited to the address set forth by the complainant or mailing address of the tax bill.

Second, H.B. 126 include notice requirements to taxpayers for increase removed in the compromise legislation. The notice requirements for increase complaints duplicate the notice provided by the Board of Revision. Further, a board of education meeting is not the forum to discuss the merits of a tax complaint. The compromise legislation retains the necessity for a school board to approve the filing of increase complaints. While intended to ensure a board of education is aware and approves the filing of complaints, H.B. 126 creates a cumbersome process for our school board to protect revenue.

We request that the Committee amend H.B.126 or incorporate the compromises agreed to by all parties, including Rep. Merrin, and approved by the Senate Ways & Means Committee, Senate Local Government Committee, and the Senate in the prior two sessions.

We appreciate your consideration of our objections and look forward to working with interested parties, the sponsor, and the committee for additional discussions.

Thank you,

Patrick Bravo

Patrick Bravo, Executive Director
Summit County Land Bank