



# **BELMONT COUNTY PORT AUTHORITY**

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**House Bill 105  
Proponent Testimony of Larry E. Merry  
Executive Director of the Belmont County Port Authority**

Thank you Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Rogers and Members of the Ways and Means Committee.

This legislation outlines a responsible and responsive distribution of the severance tax, which encourages development and returns a larger share of revenue to the shale area. Best of all, this proposal can do all that without raising the current severance tax amount – something about which I feel very strongly.

The investment and the impact of the oil and gas industry in our area are not being felt in a typical industry fashion. Each of you represents communities who have industrial parks that have industries who are employers and who have invested in those communities. All of that investment is in one location. The downside with the oil and gas industry is that the investment is county-wide. The impact goes all over the community, so it also impacts the poorest villages and townships, and effects all supporting entities such as fire departments and police departments. The gas lines, the pressure stations, and well pads are located throughout the county. Consequently, it is not just investing into an industrial park road or one location. The entire infrastructure for the whole county is affected.

The tax revenue should be directed towards the local governments to help facilitate the tremendous investment of billions of dollars by this industry in Eastern Ohio.

We have the opportunity to use revenues generated by this tax to assist local governments, improve infrastructure, equipment and services that not only benefits citizens within many areas of our districts, but that also support the industry. We can invest in asset-building that will grow Ohio's economy, put people to work, and improve the quality of life of all Ohioans. We can use this funding to invest in our citizens and to assist a part of the state that really needs this break. I strongly encourage your support of H. B. 105.

Sincerely,

Larry E. Merry  
Executive Director