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Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber
Interested Party Written Testimony for HB 422
Submitted to the Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee
May 30, 2018

Chairman Beagle, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams, members of the Senate Public Utilities Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to offer interested-party testimony regarding House Bill 422 on behalf of the Youngstown Warren Regional Chamber.

As Vice President of Governmental Affairs for the Regional Chamber, I am personally familiar with the challenges faced by the municipalities in our region when it comes to drinking water and wastewater systems. Quite frequently, as the Regional Chamber works to improve economic conditions by helping existing companies expand as well as attracting new businesses and industries to our area, the quality of the water and wastewater systems becomes a critical factor.

HB 422 works to address a serious impediment to bringing private sector funding to help municipalities address these infrastructure issues. Removal of this impediment is particularly relevant as these municipalities wrestle with competing priorities for limited funds such dealing with the opiate crisis, maintaining roads, keeping taxes under control, and providing youth, senior and neighborhood programs.

We've all likely heard the citations from the American Society of Civil Engineers that estimates of more than \$12 billion in water systems and more than \$14 billion in wastewater systems investments are needed for Ohio in the next 20 years. Generating the necessary funds is beyond challenging at both a state and regional levels.

As the Mahoning Valley's representative organization for business and economic development, the Regional Chamber, the third-largest metro chamber of commerce in Ohio with more than 2,600 members, supports the intent of HB 422 to bring private sector financial strength to our state to address some of this capital need.

Businesses and local economies throughout our state need reliable and sustainable water and wastewater services. Water and wastewater infrastructure are too easily set aside as other, more visible, priorities like roads and bridges come to the fore. But our economic prosperity and quality of life also depend heavily on the viability of Ohio's public water and wastewater systems.

Municipalities should have the option of considering a regulated utility to provide safe and reliable drinking water and wastewater services. Regulated utility acquisition of willing municipal systems can provide an untapped source of funds for these infrastructure improvements. As an additional safeguard, HB 422 contains elements that maintain the fundamental regulatory construct by keeping the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio in the process.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input regarding the importance of HB 422.

Sincerely,



Guy C. Coviello