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OHIO SENATE TRANSPORTATION, COMMERCE, AND WORKFORCE COMMITTEE

PROPONENT TESTIMONY – HOUSE BILL 62

Julie Ehemann, SHELBY COUNTY COMMISSIONER

March 20, 2019

Good morning Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce, and Workforce Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Julie Ehemann. I am one of the Commissioners from Shelby County and I am also serving as the President to the Board of CCAO. I have served in an elected position in local government for 25 years.

Today I would like to address House Bill 62 which was proposed by the Governor to increase Ohio's gasoline tax by 18 cents per gallon and would be adjusted annually for inflation. CCAO supports Governor DeWine in this initiative and is hopeful the Senate will work to increase the funding levels that have been proposed by the House. We have been concerned for a number of years to the growing needs of our State's infrastructure and to the lack of funding committed to addressing this need. With the end of the revenue from the turnpike bonds, this issue will only be magnified at all levels of government. The proposals in HB 62 will help counties address critical needs in our transportation system, including over 1,800 bridges that are eligible for immediate replacement and another 6,000 that are eligible for repair. The Governor's proposal would invest an additional \$1.7 million to each of our counties. That level of funding is greatly needed to address local roads.

You have already heard from several counties in regards to the impacts of the shortfalls in revenue as it relates to transportation infrastructure. In my own county we have been supplementing the State's portion of tax dollars with revenue from our local sales tax. This is

money that would have been welcomed for other priorities but was diverted to help this unmet need. Shelby County is unusual in committing to devote general fund revenue to infrastructure. The growing demands of funding indigent defense and other justice and public safety services consume the vast majority of most counties' budgets. The typical revenue sources that counties use for infrastructure are state distributions from the motor fuel tax, distributions from state license registration fees, and local license renewal fees.

Since 1999, Shelby County has invested over \$43 million dollars of local revenue (sales tax dollars) to supplement state dollars. With Shelby County having 383 miles of roads to maintain, 333 bridges and over 1600 culverts, we have been able to ensure we do not have any closed bridges. Unfortunately that means we still have bridges with load limits which affects the movement of goods. Using calculations from my Engineer we are still unable to maintain an appropriate paving cycle and have been converting some paved roads to chip and seal. The reality is counties throughout the state are currently not able to do projects that are long overdue. The time to address our infrastructure is now! We cannot continue to kick the can down the road or we soon will no longer have a road.

While an increase in the gas tax is a good start, it should not be looked at as the only answer. We support the House's proposal to institute user fees to address electric and other energy efficient vehicles so that all users are paying a portion of the road maintenance costs.

It is clear that Ohio must improve and expand its transportation infrastructure to meet the economic challenges of the 21st Century, and Ohio's counties are committed to partnering with the state to make this happen. CCAO will look to continued participation as our options are investigated.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address this important issue,



Julie L Ehemann

Commissioner, Shelby County

Board President, CCAO