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10/02/2023

To: Ohio House Finance Committee

Ref: House Bill 244

Good morning, Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the Finance Committee, my name is Edward Myers. I am the Fire Chief for Goshen Township Fire and EMS. I am here to testify in support of House Bill 244. Our fire department headquarters, Station 18 was struck by an EF2 tornado on July 6th, 2022. Firefighters inside the fire station had about 30 seconds notice before the tornado struck. The crew was able to take shelter in a bathroom and thankfully no one was hurt. Per a structural engineer, if the garage doors had been closed in the main portion of the building, the entire building was likely to collapse.

Goshen Township Fire and EMS responded to 3,450 calls last year and that represents a 58% increase since 2018. We have 19 full-time and 40 part-time employees and operate on a budget of 3.4 million. Our revenue is right in line with our expenses, so we have very minimal carryover. In our 2024 budget we are expected to have an unencumbered balance of approximately \$230,000. These minimal unencumbered funds are needed to get us through the first three months of the year prior to receiving our first tax payment. This is important because we have very little room in our budget for additional expenses. Furthermore, with such low reserves, we have relied on grant funding for large purchases over the last few years.

Goshen Township is rapidly growing with approximately 1,500 new homes going in over the next five years. House Bill 244 is crucial for our organization. It will allow us to continue to provide the level of service we are currently providing to the citizens of Goshen Township without making cuts that would affect public safety. We were hit by a natural disaster and our firefighters were only concerned about responding to our citizens' needs instead of their own. Station 18 is a critical part of providing emergency services to the residents of Goshen Township. Additionally, Station 18 provides mutual aid to many other municipalities in Clermont, Hamilton, and Warren Counties.

The \$2.5 million would cover the necessary items we lost in the storm such as furniture, appliances, radio/communication systems, and all the other things that are required for day-to-day operations of a fire station. It would also cover the cost of vital equipment that reduces the firefighter's exposure to cancer. The presumptive cancer laws here in Ohio require fire stations to have certain provisions in place to reduce exposure to the harmful effects of hydrocarbons and other cancer causing contaminants. Vehicle exhaust systems, washers and dryers that are

specifically designed to remove contaminants from firefighting gear, internet servers, alerting systems and many other additional costs that are not covered in the construction of the building.

In closing, I implore you to support House Bill 244. Misleading information led many to believe that we could afford to mortgage the balance of what it would cost to build a new station. While a mortgage is a possibility, a mortgage would come with great consequence to the organization and the citizens of Goshen Township. Adequate staffing, increased response times and additional dependence on mutual aid to cover emergency runs will be affected. The purchase of life saving equipment such as self-contained breathing apparatus that are required for us to breathe in environments that are immediately dangerous to our life and health will also be affected.

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the Finance Committee, I want to thank you for allowing me to provide testimony today on behalf of our organization and the citizens of Goshen Township.

Edward Myers MPA, CFO

Fire Chief Goshen Township Fire and EMS