



**County Engineers
Association of Ohio**

Ohio House Government Oversight Committee

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Chairman Petterson, Ranking Member Humphrey, and Members of House Government Oversight Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony for HB 430. My name is Patrick Ginnetti. I am the Mahoning County Engineer and President of the County Engineers Association of Ohio (CEAO).

Over the summer of 2023, CEAO met with numerous interested parties to gather feedback and propose changes to the elected position of County Engineer. Some of these interested parties included State Legislators from every region, the State Board of Professional Engineers and Professional Surveyors, county party chairs, private sector professional engineers and surveyors, and all other county-elected official associations.

HB 430 addresses the feedback received from those meetings - concluding that the County Engineer's elected office does not have enough people to run for it, however there has never *not* been an open seat on the ballot. Yes, there have been uncontested races – same as ALL local elected races. This past primary, 8 county engineers had opposition and there are multiple races in the general election.

HB 430 proposes the following items:

1) County Engineer Vacancies

When the office of County Engineer is vacant, HB 430 permits a Board of County Commissioners to contract with another county's County Engineer to perform the duties of the County Engineer in the "vacant" county, giving the contracted County Engineer supplemental compensation for doing so.

2) Remove Private Practice Compensation Penalty

Eliminate the compensation schedule applicable to County Engineers with a private practice. This subjects all County Engineers to the compensation schedule currently applicable to County Engineers "without a private practice," which is similar to many other elected county officials. Removing the Private Practice Compensation Penalty can be beneficial in a number of ways:

- **No Impact to County GRF:** As it stands now, all County Engineers' compensation is paid through the receipts from motor vehicle licenses, not the County's General Revenue Fund. Therefore, this change would not impact county budgets.

Currently, there is only one County Engineer with a private practice. CEAO does not predict that many current elected County Engineers would take advantage of this change, however we believe this would be a candidate recruitment tool for future qualified candidates to run for office.

3) Codify Nationally Accepted Ethical Standards Already In Practice

HB 430 prohibits a County Engineer from engaging in the private practice of engineering or surveying in a county in which the person is the County Engineer or Acting County Engineer.

Ethical standards held in the profession do not permit any engineer or surveyor to review their own work. HB 430 would not change this, however the County Engineer would be permitted to do work in the other 87 counties or any state in which they are licensed to practice. This would broaden the pool of private sector dual licensed professionals (P.E., P.S.).

HB 430 does NOT address the following, BUT we strongly feel the items should also be addressed by the Legislature:

1) The Need for a Market Adjustment in Compensation for County Engineers (P.E., P.S.)

A market adjustment is needed for the elected County Engineer to bring the salaries in-line with your own state transportation agency employees. This will not only level the playing field and encourage more qualified individuals to run for the elected county engineer offices but it will also increase the interest of private sector professionals.

ODOT is a County Engineer's direct employee competitor. Some ODOT Transportation Engineers (TE-4, TE-5) and District Deputy Directors have lower qualifications and less responsibility than County Engineers yet are being compensated at a higher wage.

2) Disproportionate Compensation of the County Engineer to Their Employees & ODOT

Many County Engineers have deputy engineers, staff engineers and staff surveyors who are being compensated more in wages than the elected official. The gap in pay can range up to 15%, all while some of these engineers and/or surveyors possess only one of the two licenses held by the County Engineer.

Additionally, employment of professional surveyors is projected to grow 5 percent from 2022 to 2032, which is faster than the average for all occupations according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.