



## **OHIO HOUSE GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

**May 7, 2024**

### **Written Interested Party Testimony House Bill 331**

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the Ohio House Government Oversight Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written interested party testimony regarding the Ohio Municipal League's position on House Bill 331.

HB331 triggers an automatic process for the question of dissolving a village to appear on the ballot based on the results of a decennial audit that would determine:

- 1.) Whether the village provides at least five out of nine services either independently or through a contract with a non-governmental third party, and
- 2.) Whether at least one candidate appeared on the ballot for each elected village position.

As an association of more than 730 municipalities, of which nearly 500 are villages, we appreciate that this bill recognizes strong local governance – that the best decisions for a community are made at the local level, closest to home. We also hope it brings to mind the importance of the state and local partnership to provide for adequate funding of communities.

If you were to look at a spectrum of municipal services, you would find that purposes such as police, street maintenance, and delivery of water and sewer typically fall under the “required” category. There also exist quasi-required services such as public recreation or even fire service that are often expected of municipalities. Most other services would be considered voluntary amenities for residents.

In recognition of the traditional landscape of local governments partnering to provide police, fire and EMS services, the ability for villages to opt to receive such services through other governmental entities – including township fire service – should remain without it counting against the village. In the bill, villages must meet certain criteria, one of which is providing these services only through non-governmental entities. Local governments have been encouraged in the past to work together and collaborate with one other. Changing this provision in the bill to preserve intergovernmental agreements would continue to encourage such cooperation while also allowing such services to remain a decision of the village.

Further consideration should also be given to who pays for the decennial audits included in the bill, as well as who would pay for the dissolution question to be on the ballot, which should not fall upon the village. We know the General Assembly is very concerned about the impacts of unfunded mandates coming from the state onto their local partners, which in this case would be

villages. This is a concern that we hope this committee appreciates and would try to rectify by ensuring the provisions of this bill do not serve as an unfunded mandate at the local level.

Further, we hope this bill raises awareness of the broad spectrum of services provided in municipalities and how such services have the potential to dissipate in small communities, which often struggle with having enough funding to even provide core services.

We encourage members of the Legislature to reach out to the municipalities in your districts to further understand their struggles.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 331. Please feel free to reach out to the Ohio Municipal League on this matter in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Scarrett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kent Scarrett  
Executive Director  
Ohio Municipal League