



OFFICE OF
THE MAYOR
CHRISTINA M. MURYN

Rob Martin, BSN, MBA
Service-Safety Director

November 22, 2023

RE: Ohio House Bill 296 Opponent Testimony

Dear Chair Matthews, Ranking Member Lightbody, and Members of the House Pensions Committee thank you for the opportunity to submit opponent testimony on House Bill 296. Many who know me may be surprised to see me testifying in opposition to House Bill 296.

As the daughter of a former Auxiliary Police Officer and the stepdaughter of a former District Fire Chief I have a deep respect for our safety services and the critical role that they play in each of our communities every day. Now as Mayor of the City of Findlay I play a critical role in supporting our Police Office and Firefighters while also managing the budget of our City. I am a strong believer that our commitment to support them does not end when they retire from our ranks.

Over the last few months I have watched the discussion related to the proposed increases to the Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund. As you have heard from many of my colleagues the increase to the employer contribution certainly has a negative impact on our communities not only the initial dollars but the long-term compounding cost. In Findlay the proposed increase is estimated to cost \$1.5-2 million over the next 5 years. This poses both short term and long-term risks to how we manage our cities budget **and invest in our current public safety workforce.**

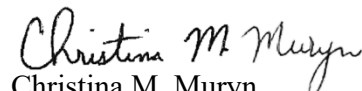
I am certainly supportive of ensuring that our Police and Fire receive appropriate retirement compensation, but **this must not occur at the expense of local investments into hiring new officers, paying competitive wages, and ensuring that they have the equipment needed to keep them safe.** Further, I have not seen sufficient validated information to feel that the changes proposed in HB 296 will solve the problems the Fund is currently experiencing nor those it is projecting.

Therefore, I ask that the Committee postpone any further action on this legislation until they have had an opportunity to complete the following: Hire an outside firm to complete a full review of the Fund as well as prepare recommendations on how to ensure long term sustainability of our Police & Fire Pension Fund. This should include a full review of other Fund structures as seen across the country, policies for Cost of Living Increases, methods for funding through local, state, employee, and tax revenue contributions, as well as an implementation process of potential changes.

Ensuring a sustainable pension program is critical and though an influx of cash from our local communities may provide a better picture in the short term it is not solving the root problem. I ask that each of you make the responsible decision to protect our taxpayer dollars while also staying true to our commitment of supporting those who have so honorably served us.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,


Christina M. Muryn
Mayor