

November 26, 2023

Representative Adam Mathews, Chairman
Ohio House Pensions Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Mathews and members of the Ohio House Pensions Committee:

On behalf of the City of Troy, I submit this testimony in total opposition to House Bill 296. I will begin by stating for the record my objection to this Committee not only scheduling opponent testimony a mere day and a half after a long holiday weekend but also to changing the deadline for submissions to 2 hours before the normal business day even. Doing so makes it apparent how disinterested the Chairman must be in hearing objections from your municipalities.

Regarding this proposed bill, in an atmosphere of the most severe inflationary pressures seen in decades and pressures to provide the most basic services to our residents and businesses, its introduction is at best poor timing and at worst a blatant attempt to further restrict our home rule responsibilities to provide those services. Introducing such a bill will further hamper municipal efforts to keep Ohio safe, which will not only jeopardize our residents, but also impede our quality of life and ability to attract economic development.

The City of Troy firmly supports its police and fire personnel and their families, and the City annually budgets millions of dollars to ensure they are well-paid, well-equipped, and well-trained. Nearly 55% of our 2024 General Fund budget is devoted to our first responders. Of that \$14.1 million allocation to our Police and Fire operations, 86% will be spent on their salaries and benefits.

The full impact of HB296 on Troy is estimated at nearly \$190,000 per year by 2027. A new police officer costs nearly \$90,000 per year with salary, benefits and equipment, thus the 4.5% pension increase would equate to between 2 and 3 officers hired or retained in Troy. In a community of Troy's size and diverse economic base, the impact of losing even one officer to unnecessary unfunded mandates such as HB296 would have severe negative impacts on the safety of our community. Troy is able to fully support our first responder staff because we offer a competitive wage, comprehensive benefits, full personal protective gear, and all of the tools to do their jobs effectively on behalf of our residents, businesses and visitors.

For these reasons, I urge this Committee to oppose HB296 in its current form and to continue to seek workable alternatives with the Ohio Municipal League. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Robin I. Oda
Mayor



WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: Tuesday, November 28, 2023

Name: Robin I. Oda

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): City of Troy, Ohio

Position/Title: Mayor

Address: 100 S. Market St.

City: Columbus State: OH Zip: 45373

Best Contact Telephone: 937-412-3260 Email: mayor.Robin.Oda@troyohio.gov

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB296

Specific Issue: Bill Increasing Employer Contributions for Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 5 minutes

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

This bill significantly impacts our municipal budget by adding an increase to an already generous PD and FD budget, which are the largest pieces of our annual budget. This increase would pay for two more first responders at a time when all municipalities are struggling to attract and hire individuals to give us full staffing.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.