

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Merrin, Ranking Member Troy, and all members of the House Ways and Means committee, I am Mayor Mark Messer of Lebanon, Ohio and I am here to speak in support of House Bill 1.

I applaud its goals of cutting taxes and simplifying the tax code, even if that means a slight decrease in revenue for my city coming from the state. I understand that there is no such thing as government money; it is all taxpayer money. The more money we can keep in the hands of our constituents the better it is for economic growth.

I was first elected to Lebanon City Council in 2011 and I have seen the instability caused by relying on state funding and the inherent unfairness of having others cover the costs of our own spending. When Governor Kasich released his budget slashing the local government fund, we realized that the best way to self-sufficiency, and we pride ourselves in that, was listening to our own constituents for what mattered to them. We adjusted then, and we could adjust again since our end goal is not to enrich government coffers but to serve our families and businesses to ensure that they thrive.

Lebanon continues to grow along with the rest of Warren County and that's due to our family and business-friendly political environment. Our low taxes and conservative fiscal principles create an environment that families and businesses thrive in, all on their own, without a heavy hand of Government. Lebanon is known for its, Apple Festival, Blues Festival, its hundred-carriage strong Christmas Horse Parade, and its many smaller festivals, concerts, and events. And each of those is put on by private organizations like the Optimist Club, the Lebanon Area Chamber of Commerce, and Rotary. Other places use tax dollars, and with the property tax rollback, that means frugal places like ours are paying for their spending.

We trust our voters to know what is important to them and use the ballot box responsibly. Years ago, in 2015, there was some complaining our roads were not the quality they wanted. We proposed a ballot initiative that set out the question: do you want to raise income taxes to improve the roads? The voters, 62-38, said no to the income tax increase. I and others on City Council respected that decision. Since then, by focusing on growth and being creative, we not only improved our roads but have now set our city up for 10% population growth. Our other levies often pass, and we are about to go to the voters for a fire levy. We expect this one to be successful, too. I find it odd that other municipalities or counties would be afraid of hearing from their voters if what they are providing them is of value and aligns with what they want.

Now is the time for bold action. Here in Warren County, our Commissioners took the lead and gave a tax holiday of \$47 million, rightfully returning money back to our people. I support the principles and spirit of House Bill 1 doing the same, cutting taxes for all those paying income taxes, while removing the veil of subsidies aka. rollbacks on property taxes. People should know exactly what they pay in taxes and why they are paying them. We each should do our jobs to educate our voters then trust them to make the best decisions for their families and communities. Thank you for your time.