



Before the Ohio House Ways & Means Committee
Proponent Testimony on House Bill 344

January 9, 2024

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the Ohio House Ways & Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 344 on behalf of the members of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. My name is Tony Long, and I am the General Counsel at the Ohio Chamber.

For far too long, the world of property taxation and levies to raise funds on property valuation remains shrouded in opaque language. The system only favors those with a keen interest in the topic or who spend a career in the field. HB 344 begins the process of adding plain language to the structure with the removal of the word replacement and the use of renewal levies for decreases, status quo or increases in taxes raised from the levy. Hopefully, HB 344 is just the beginning of a process to make the property tax structure more understandable and clear for all Ohioans. Many discuss whether voters currently understand or do not understand the property tax levies appearing on a ballot. Millage, inside millage, reduction factors, market value, tax value Class I, Class II and other terminology can cause confusion, but the Ohio Chamber thinks a better conversation is to ask why only approximately 50% of eligible voters cast a vote during gubernatorial election years and far less than that percentage in off-year elections. Participation from more Ohioans in the governing of Ohio would be a good thing and hopefully an outcome sought by the new Joint Committee on Property Tax Review and Reform.

The second part of HB 344 seeks to clear up the functionality of HB 126 enacted during the last General Assembly. HB 344 makes clear that a resolution adopted by a political subdivision to file a complaint against the property value of a fellow resident applies to third party complaints filed on behalf of the subdivision. Additionally, political subdivisions can only file counter-complaints if the original complaint was filed by the owner or tenant of the property and not a different political subdivision.

Finally, HB 344 narrows the sales component of HB 126. HB 344 specifies that a conveyance fee statement for the sale must have been filed with the county auditor within two years preceding the year for which the complaint is filed. These changes should clear up some of the current debate on the applicability of HB 126 to complaints and which years are subject to third party complaints. At HB 126 hearings during the 134th General Assembly the Ohio Chamber testified in support of a system that only allowed third parties to counter-complain valuation after a property owner or tenant sought modification of the property's value at a BOR hearing. HB 344 adds necessary clarification, but the Ohio Chamber is also a proponent of moving toward the vast majority of states that do not allow third party interference in real property valuation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for HB 344. The Ohio Chamber supports the changes to both the levy section and property valuation appeal language section of the bill. I will now try to answer any questions you may have for me.