



Date: February 14, 2017

To: Members, Ohio House of Representatives State and Local Government Committee

From: Kent Scarrett
Executive Director
Ohio Municipal League

RE: Overview testimony of the Ohio Municipal League

Chairman Anielski, Vice-Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Bishoff, and members of the State and Local Government Committee; my name is Kent Scarrett and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Municipal League and I want to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share with you the role of the Ohio Municipal League and how we can be a resource to you.

The Ohio Municipal League is a non-profit that represents the collective interests of Ohio's cities and villages before the General Assembly. The League is governed by a Board of Trustees, made up of municipal officials from across the state, which acts as our policy-making body and appoints the Executive Director to manage the League under their general direction.

We testify before committees, coordinate the testimony of municipal officials, suggest amendments, and meet with legislators and their staff on bills that affect municipalities. We are a little different than our local government counterparts, the CCAO and the OTA in that we do not have to seek legislative changes to the ORC to administer different functions of our operations. Being a creature of the Ohio Constitution, municipalities have the Home Rule authority that allows us to operate in a more autonomous manner and that is something that is a benefit to the Ohio legislature since we don't have to seek their authority to perform our administrative responsibilities. The league produces weekly Legislative Bulletins when the legislature is in session and we also have a bi-monthly magazine entitled *Cities and Villages Magazine*. OML is also one of the nation's 49 municipal leagues that is a member of the National League of Cities, which serves as a resource for

municipalities across the nation in areas such as training, education, programming and advocacy.

Of Ohio's 931 municipalities, 733 of them are members of OML. 226 of these are cities and 507 are villages. In addition to serving as their collective voice, we are also a resource for those municipalities. Just a few of these resources include our Legal Advocacy program, our Worker's Comp Group Rating and Joint Self Insurance Pool, and our research and inquiry response. We also provide training for new councilmembers, Mayor's court training programs through the Ohio Supreme Court and have begun the Ohio Municipal Energy Aggregation Program.

We also house a number of affiliates, including the Mayors Association of Ohio, the Ohio Municipal Attorneys Association, the Municipal Finance Officers Association, the Ohio Association of Public Safety Directors and the Ohio Municipal Income Tax Committee.

In our new Legislative Policy Agenda, which you all should have received a copy of, we have placed our legislative priorities into four buckets: job creation and the advancement of economic development; the protection of our citizens through responsible public safety and health measures; investment in public infrastructure and clean water; and the advancement of good government and fiscal responsibility.

Our representation has a wide reach throughout our state. Out of Ohio's roughly 11.5 million citizens, almost 9 million live in municipalities. OML represents just over 7 million of Ohio's citizens through our membership municipalities. Even those merely traveling through the state are impacted by municipal responsibility. 9,343 miles of state highways are maintained by municipalities, in addition to the maintenance of 31,725 miles of roads under municipal jurisdiction throughout the state. The health of our municipalities so greatly impact both the state and the individual citizen that we asked former Budget Director of the Voinovich Administration, Dr. Greg Browning of Capital Partners, to study the challenges cities and villages face and assess the opportunities available to address them. The result is our *Strategic Framework & Action Agenda*, which you should also have a copy of as well.

As the *Strategic Framework* demonstrates, municipalities face a variety of challenges, from a confluence of issues that have presented financial strains on municipal budgets across the state that have resulted in, among other things, a lack of opportunity to invest in critical infrastructure projects and challenging municipalities ability to keep-up with transportation investments that Ohio residents and businesses expect. And then there are the myriad of challenges that present themselves as a result of the escalating opioid epidemic.

These challenges are multifaceted, and there is no one, simple solution. While OML proposes, and will advocate for a series of solutions, the largest and perhaps the most

important first step will be reigniting the relationship between the state and municipalities. Our cities and villages are the economic engines of the state, and a healthier Ohio will mean a reinvestment in municipalities from the state. We at OML look forward to facilitating and encouraging that reignited relationship. If municipalities succeed, Ohio succeeds.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. But before I go, I want to remind committee members that they have been sent an invitation to our first ever Municipal Study Group meeting, tomorrow, Feb. 15th 8am at the Sheraton on Cap. Square. Please come. Thank you