

Public Policy Agenda

2025-2026



 **OMIL**
OHIO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
Partnering for Stronger Cities and Villages



Partnering For Stronger Cities And Villages

The Ohio Municipal League (OML) serves as the primary connection point between municipal and state government in Ohio, representing the interests of cities and villages to lawmakers and the governor's administration.

We are pleased to present our 2025-2026 Public Policy Agenda, which highlights core areas of focus essential to the ability of municipalities to carry out their work and provide critical services for their residents and visitors – including infrastructure, recreation, first-responder services, and important operational needs such as snow removal.

Residents are best served and experience a higher quality of life when state and local government work together – preserving local decision making and providing for long-term, sustainable financial resources.

2 out of 3 Ohio residents live in a city or village, which translates to roughly 8 million people in our state's 926 municipalities.

Without collaboration between local and state government, infrastructure maintenance is delayed, there is less investment in economic development, public safety and health are reduced, higher taxes become inevitable, and municipalities struggle to maintain adequate staffing levels. This can be avoided.

OML exists to effectively advocate for cities and villages at the state level, to inspire and inform on best practices within municipalities, and to work alongside government, business, non-profit, and educational leaders – all of whom are important partners in creating stronger Ohio communities.



2025-2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Restore Local Government Fund (LGF)

- Return to historical funding levels
- Stem future cuts to LGF revenue sources
- Refund municipal supplemental distributions redirected away from intended municipalities in past budgets

Ensure the Effectiveness of the Municipal Income Tax

- Defend the integrity of this critical source of revenue for Ohio's municipalities
- Preserve the ability of municipalities to administer their own local tax

Preserve Home Rule

- Allow Ohio's local leaders to make local decisions
- Avoid statewide preemptions

No Unfunded Mandates

- Any new state-initiated priority that would have a financial impact on Ohio's municipalities should be fully funded by the state
- Similar to the state's resistance to unfunded mandates from the federal level, municipalities should not receive unfunded mandates from the state
- Municipal budgets are even more constrained than the budgets of their state partners

Protect Public Safety

- Provide dedicated state funding for police officer training
- Offer grants for the purchase of law enforcement and fire equipment
- Aid in the recruitment and retention of first responders

Invest in Public Infrastructure

- Increase state funding for municipal transportation infrastructure, including bridges, roads, and public transit
- Provide state funds for local water, sewer, housing and broadband investments

Partner to Fight Opioid Addiction

- Earmark funds for local public and private health and safety initiatives
- Partner on education and prevention efforts
- Collect and share more data and information with public health and safety officials

CREATING JOBS

OML advocates for policies that help our communities create jobs, advance economic development, and promote sustainable economic growth.

★ **Economic Growth**

Support and facilitate job creation and economic development efforts by municipalities, providing more tools and flexibility to develop and redevelop properties, retain and expand jobs, and promote workforce development in partnership with business.

★ **Annexation**

Support and facilitate the rights of property owners and municipalities to annex property and assure economic development, essential municipal services, and fiscal responsibility.

★ **Housing**

Support and facilitate the development of a broad spectrum of safe, affordable, fair housing and provide municipalities with the tools and authority to ensure property owners maintain their properties.

★ **Land Use Planning, Management, and Control**

Support and facilitate the primacy of municipalities in land use and development matters within and around their jurisdictions to promote effective and sustainable growth, safe buildings and infrastructure, and management of right of way.

★ **Removing Childcare as a Barrier to the Workforce**

Ohio communities are strengthened when everyone who desires to work has the opportunity to do so. We support ideas that have been floated to incentivize public-private partnerships, create tax credits for childcare expenses and philanthropic contributions to childcare programs, make childcare workers and kinship/foster caregivers eligible for publicly funded childcare benefits, and create a tri-share model dividing childcare expenses among willing employers, employees, and the state.

Municipalities work hand-in-hand with our businesses and residents to strengthen our economy. We must partner with state leaders to find new tools to promote investment, job creation, and workforce development.

PROTECTING CITIZENS

OML advocates for policies that help our communities protect citizens through responsible public safety and health measures.

★ **Fighting the Opioid Epidemic**

Support and facilitate new funding with state and local cooperation to address the threat of opioid and other harmful drugs through law enforcement, addiction treatment, and public education.

★ **Homeland Security and Emergency Management**

Support and facilitate intergovernmental coordination and cooperation, training, and investment on matters of public safety, health, and emergency management.

★ **Supporting First Responders**

Support and facilitate direct operational and financial assistance to local agencies managing first responders, health services, and infrastructure on homeland security and public emergencies.

★ **Liquor Control**

Support and facilitate cooperation and understanding of municipal recommendations, and on local safety and operating, in the regulation of liquor permits within a municipality.

Our communities are on the front lines fighting the opioid crisis. Our public safety and health officials need stronger funding, information sharing, and partnership with the state to fight crime and treat those in need.



INVESTING IN PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLEAN WATER

OML advocates for policies that help our communities provide clean drinking water, safe and efficient transportation, safe energy, and quality parks through reliable public infrastructure investments and services.

★ **Transportation**

Support and facilitate a safe and efficient transportation system with adequate funding of state infrastructure within municipalities and for effective local public transit systems, and work with municipalities to expand local funding and public-private partnership tools.

★ **Clean Drinking Water**

Support and facilitate local agencies providing clean drinking water and sanitary and stormwater management services, and provide adequate funding to help locals comply with environmental mandates, funding, and regulation to ensure water sources are protected from natural and man-made risks.

★ **Broadband and Smart/Emerging Technology**

Support and facilitate public and private investment in broadband and smart/emerging technology, and respect local authority over the use of local public facilities, lands, and right of ways for these investments.

Clean water, safe roads, and information technology are not local issues; they are fundamental to our state's public health, safety, and economic competitiveness. Our state must become a stronger partner in local infrastructure initiatives.

ADVANCING GOOD GOVERNMENT AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

OML advocates for policies that help our communities promote ethical, efficient, and fiscally responsible governance through effective leadership and financial management, guided by home rule.

★ **Home Rule**

Support and facilitate the home rule of municipalities, grounded in our state constitution and guided by our citizens, and have state policy that resists infringement on this authority.

★ **Taxes and Finances**

Support and facilitate the right of municipalities to impose and collect an income tax on earnings within their boundaries to provide funding for essential municipal services like police, fire, emergency medical services, and snow removal.

★ **Pension Accountability**

Ensure financial oversight and accountability of state pension systems, including OP&F and OPERS, through actuarial analyses and stakeholder input to protect taxpayer dollars being paid into the systems.

★ **Fiscal Responsibility**

Support and facilitate municipal management and do not impose unfunded mandates, employment restrictions, or other impairments to local decision making, funding, and governance.

To serve our residents and promote development effectively, we need local decision making and local financial management without state preemptions, unfunded mandates, and tampering with our finances. Let's rebuild our state-municipal relationship based upon mutual respect and cooperation.

★ **Ethics**

Support and facilitate good-government practices and training of local elected officials and employees on ethics, financing, management, procurement, and customer service.

★ **Cooperation and Innovation**

Support and facilitate municipalities cooperating and sharing services with other public agencies and promoting innovation to improve service delivery, customer service, and cost efficiencies.

★ **Racial Equity**

Advance racial equity in our local communities. We will continue to partner with other government associations and community leaders to identify current and historical racial disparities and help educate local leaders on ways to ensure inclusiveness and equity in communities.



Learn More About OML:



OML Staff Contacts

Kent Scarrett | *Executive Director*

Edward Albright | *Deputy Director*

Chrissy Blake | *Director of Member Services*

Jonathon McGee | *Legal Counsel*

Bevan Schneck | *Director of Public Affairs*

Zoë Wade | *Office Manager*

Thomas Wetmore | *Legislative Advocate*

Michael Barhorst | *Field Representative*

(614) 221-4349 • info@omloho.org

175 South Third Street, Suite 510, Columbus, Ohio 43215



OML Board of Trustees

Michael Barhorst
Sidney City Council

Bobbie Beshara
Rittman City Manager

Justin Bibb
Cleveland Mayor

Sharon Cassler
Cambridge Clerk of Council

Rod Davisson
Obetz City Manager

Terrence Donnellon
Montgomery Law Director

Luke Feeney
Chillicothe Mayor

Jeff Gaskin
South Point Mayor

Marc Glotzbecker
Gibsonburg Village Manager

Eric Keckler
Fostoria Safety Director

Belinda Kenley
Centerville City Council

Chris Kerby
South Zanesville Fiscal Officer

Donald Mason
Zanesville Mayor

Steven Mientkiewicz
Niles Mayor

Sean O'Donnell
Defiance Law Director

Steve Patterson
Athens Mayor

Emmanuel Remy
Columbus City Council

Carrie Schlade
Bryan Mayor

Craig Sherman
Minster Council

Matt Starr
Mount Vernon Mayor

Patrick Titterington
Troy Safety/Service Director

Tracey Wonner
Lisbon Fiscal Officer

The Ohio Municipal League also manages the following member associations:

- Mayors Association of Ohio
- Municipal Engineers Association of Ohio
- Municipal Finance Officers Association of Ohio
- Ohio Association of Public Safety Directors
- Ohio Municipal Attorneys Association
- Ohio Municipal Clerks Association
- Ohio Municipal Income Tax Administrators Committee