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House Bill 315, Township Omnibus Bill House Finance Committee June 18, 2024

Good morning, Chairman Edwards, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee. I am Kyle Brooks, Director of Governmental Affairs for the Ohio Township Association (OTA). I appreciate the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 315, better known as the township omnibus bill.

As many of you know, townships are statutory governments and can only do what the *Ohio Revised Code* permits or inherently implies, thus the need for the changes that you find in House Bill 315. The township omnibus bill before you addresses multiple township-related items at once.

HB 315 and its 15 provisions come as a mixture of the OTA working with Representative Hall and Representative Seitz, direct requests from townships across the state, legislative priorities voted on by the OTA Board of Directors, and with the members of the House State & Local Government Committee on the bill.

While there are 15 provisions included in HB 315, I will only specifically address two items that allocate state funds, which triggered this Committee's review of HB 315.

Reinstates Indigent Burial Reimbursement Funding

In 2019, the General Assembly reinstated the Indigent Burial Fund. The fund was used to help reimburse local governments, like townships, for their expenses related to indigent burials. The State's FY 24-25 operating budget (HB 33) provided revenue for the fund's administration but did not include the actual funding for local government reimbursements. HB 315 re-establishes the fund by allocating \$1 million per fiscal year to be used by all local governments to defray the costs of indigent burials.

Provides Grant Funding to Modernize Zoning Regulations & Processes

Comprehensive plans and zoning resolutions guide future land use decision-making and policy decisions. HB 315 appropriates \$1.5 million per fiscal year to assist all local governments seeking to modernize regulations and processes tied to zoning efforts. The recent development in Licking County (Intel) and Fayette County (Honda) have brought to light the importance of keeping comprehensive plans and zoning resolutions up to date. Townships in these counties have been challenged with major changes and have struggled to update their plans and resolutions. Most townships do not have the staff or general fund monies. This grant program would certainly help.

HB 315 also includes the following items:

- Alters township public notice requirements
- Permits township to create a Preservation Commission
- Alters how zoning citations are issued and enforced

- Eliminates requirement that the trustees furnish a marks and brands book to the fiscal officer
- Creates a township license plate
- Clarifies general fund money may be used for roads
- Permits a township to require registration of massage therapy establishments
- Specifies reasons for a which a township can declare an emergency
- Removes the requirement that the prosecutor approve fire specifications
- Eliminates the requirement that township hall repairs or renovations be placed on the ballot if the cost is over the competitive bidding threshold
- Permits townships, in limited circumstances, to establish a community host fee

Amendment Request

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Finance Committee, I respectfully ask your consideration for an amendment to HB 315 that would reinsert language allowing urban townships – those that have a population of at least 15,000 in the unincorporated territory of the township *and* have adopted township limited home rule pursuant to R.C. §504.01 – to utilize new community authorities. In full disclosure, the provision was removed prior to the House State and Local Government Committee favorably reporting the bill.

A new community authority is a development tool allowing for additional economic growth within a subdivision. First, a developer or landowner MUST petition to be included in the NCA. It is important to note that no landowner can be forced into an NCA. Those owners can then be charged a “development charge, and the monies collected go directly back into the area that makes up the NCA.

The development charge is designated to assist with infrastructure such as sidewalks, water and sewer lines, and road paving. In the case of an NCA, only the developers/landowners are paying for those improvements, and the charges are not levied among all property owners.

Recently enacted legislation (HB 33) authorizes a board of township trustees in a township with at least 5,000 people and in a county with a population of at least 200,000 and not more than 400,000 people to form a new community authority or delete territory from an existing new community district that is entirely within the unincorporated territory of the township, rather than giving the county commissioners that authority. The As Introduced version of HB 315 would have expanded this permissive authority to urban townships. ***This provision will only impact 12 townships in the state, 6 of which are in Hamilton County.*** The OTA respectfully asks **this committee to amend HB 315 and reinsert the language allowing urban townships to create a New Community Authority.**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.