



Mid-Ohio Regional
Planning Commission

**Nancy Reger, Director of Regional Data & Mapping
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
Interested Party Testimony – House Bill 130
Ohio House State Government Committee
June 10, 2015**

Chairman Maag, Ranking Member Gerberry and members of the House State Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the benefits and importance of House Bill 130, which pertains to advancing data sharing by public agencies and enabling online access to it.

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, where I am pleased to serve as Director of Data and Mapping, is a voluntary association of more than 60 local governments and regional organizations in the 15-county Columbus Region. Also known as MORPC, we are both a governmental entity and a non-profit organization. Our focus is on providing services, solutions, programs, planning, and funding for our local communities and other regional partners. In recent years, we have also prioritized assisting our local governments in exploring new ways to share services and create new efficiencies.

With data collection and analysis being a key component of what we do, we are continually positioning MORPC to serve as an information hub for the Columbus Region, providing demographics, maps, and tools to inform decision making. An example of this is the Regional Data Task Force that we convened to recommend ways to simplify access to data, thereby enabling analysts to get to the heart of issues more quickly, rather than spending valuable time to simply get information together.

I am sharing information about the work that MORPC performs with data to emphasize that the concepts laid forth in the Representatives Duffey's and Hagan's bill for coordinated, managed, and accessible information are prevalent at all levels of government.

In addition, MORPC recognizes that 'data' is a generic term, but the practice of accessing and sharing data is a technical enterprise. If House Bill 130 is enacted, many small communities may seek assistance in making their information available. We applaud the forethought included in House Bill 130 to provide some financial assistance toward this end, as well as to examine best practices through the DataOhio Board.

Data allows communities to identify strengths and weaknesses in their business practices, open paths to new opportunities, and benchmark themselves against best practices. While it might seem obvious that communities could, should, or do put their data online, many do not have the technical capability to do so. They may lack the capacity to structure their data for uploading or the knowledge of how to do it.

Furthermore, data comes in many forms. It might be reports, charts, maps, graphs, pictures or videos, and they will need to sift through the information they have to set priorities. This information is not only beneficial to the government entities themselves, but to the individuals they serve.

We believe that the ideas in House Bill 130 mirror initiatives happening right now at the regional level and that similar activities sanctioned at the state level will serve to anchor and provide guidance for data sharing among state, regional, and local agencies.

While MORPC is withholding official support from House Bill 130 due to the portion that addresses the uniform accounting procedures – only because our local government members have their own preferences on the best way to perform these functions and MORPC has limited expertise in it – we applaud the efforts of Representatives Duffey and Hagan to continue to bring the topic of open data sharing to the forefront through their legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss House Bill 130. I am happy to answer any questions that you might have.

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Jung Kim
Co-Chair, Columbus Regional Data Site Task Force

Thank you Chairman Maag, Ranking Member Gerberry and members of the House State Government Committee for the opportunity to appear before you to speak on House Bill 130.

I am here as a co-chair of the Regional Data Site Task Force convened by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC). This task force is comprised of representatives from a variety of disciplines across public, private, and non-profit sectors to discuss the need for a regional data portal for Central Ohio. Having a portal such as this will allow decision makers, analysts, educators, students, and businesses to spend less time finding data, and more time using it to transform it into actionable outcomes.

At this point, the group has recommended that the portal include a number of elements similar to what is described in House Bill 130, including an online data catalog that allows users access to available data sets by searching on a keyword or topic. Discussion around a governance structure, similar to the data board concept recommended in House Bill 130, is just beginning.

I am both a data consumer and provider. This is what led me to participate in the data site task force and to testify today. As Research Director for the Columbus Chamber of Commerce and for Columbus 2020, the Columbus Region's economic development organization, I wrestle with data every day. While these organizations have not taken official positions on the bill, there was no concern or opposition regarding my testimony.

My day-to-day work involves gathering data from a wide range of sources:

- federal, state and local governments
- foreign government agencies, central banks
- corporate reports, SEC filings
- nonprofit organizations
- private data providers, media

For members of the Columbus Chamber, the data we analyze helps fulfill their needs to better understand their customers, whether businesses or consumers, or their workforce. For Columbus 2020, data feeds into marketing materials, business development and making the case for the Columbus Region and Ohio for investment and job creation.

My team prepares responses to companies considering location or expansion here. Many companies are concerned about the costs of doing business, including state and local taxes. Even for something that seems as ordinary and commonplace as millage rates, county auditors vary significantly in how they provide that data on their websites. It may be a lookup tool, a calculator, at best a rate table in PDF. In the end, we have to take additional steps to process the data into a usable format, likely replicating an Excel or similar file that the auditor already has on hand.

Why not make a public records request, you may ask?

We occasionally do make requests, whether for millage rates, parcel data, or other information, but there is time and expense on all sides to handle and deliver on those requests. If we need the data for an active economic development project, the turnaround time demanded from our clients or their consultants can be a week, more typically three days, sometimes under 24 hours. We often have to make do with whatever is available at the time.

From a broader economic development perspective, cities with open data initiatives such as New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Austin have seen the availability of data help spur innovation in IT and data analytics. Open data levels the playing field, providing even startups and

individuals the ability to obtain data, analyze it, and develop their software or other products – or just play an active role in their community.

By incentivizing the sharing of data, by creating a Data Board that can advise on what data can be made accessible and how, the proposed legislation if enacted can demonstrate the benefits and best practices for having data available in an easily machine-readable format. The concepts of transparent government and an informed citizenry have been first and foremost for discussions in support of House Bill 130, as they should be, but open data will bring a myriad of other positive impacts. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to present. I would be happy to take any questions.