



## **MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

111 Liberty Street, Suite 100  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
morpc.org

T. 614. 228.2663  
TTY. 1.800.750.0750  
info@morpc.org

### **House Bill 257 Proponent Testimony October 24, 2023**

#### **House Government Oversight Committee**

**William Murdock, Executive Director, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission**

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 257. My name is William Murdock, I am the Executive Director of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC).

MORPC is a regional planning organization and regional council representing more than 80 local governments and partner organizations across 15 Central Ohio counties. Our communities span urban, suburban, and rural areas, comprising a broad cross-section of Ohioans. We provide programs, services, and funding related to transportation, land use, data, sustainability, and economic prosperity.

Our geographic diversity is one of our greatest strengths as an organization, and we greatly value the wide swath of perspectives that make up our membership. Whether it's Ranking Member Humphrey's and Representative Brown's constituents in the City of Columbus or Representative Cross's constituents 50 miles away in Bellefontaine and Logan County, every community brings unique ideas to our table.


This geographic diversity is exactly why House Bill 257 is important to us as an organization. During the state of emergency brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual meetings became a necessary tool for all of us – and at MORPC, it transformed the way we conduct our commission and committee meetings. By maintaining a non-voting virtual attendance option and conducting all of our meetings in a hybrid format, our attendance numbers have drastically improved. As we continue to grow in number, this tool gives greater access to far-away members and encourages greater participation in our proceedings. Furthermore, passage of House Bill 257 would take away the guesswork during emergencies and keep our commission up and running when conditions do not allow for in-person meetings.

**William Murdock,**  
**AICP**  
*Executive Director*

**Chris Amorose**  
**Groomes**  
*Interim Chair*

**Michelle**  
**Crandall**  
*Interim Vice  
Chair*

**Ben Kessler**  
*Interim Secretary*



It is in this spirit that we support House Bill 257. We also join our statewide organization, the Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) in requesting two important changes:

1. **Allow public bodies to define “major non-routine expenditures” and “significant hiring decisions”.**

As is pointed out in OARC’s testimony, non-routine expenditures and significant hiring decisions can have very different meanings in different contexts. Namely, they can vary by the size of the organization. While we support a requirement that organizations have a well-defined policy to govern expenditure approval, we would recommend allowing the public bodies themselves to determine what these terms mean by requiring definitions in their respective remote meetings policies.

2. **Modify or eliminate the requirement that all votes be taken by roll call.**

While we appreciate the sponsors’ intention to ensure thorough accountability, this requirement would be incredibly burdensome for our commission. At MORPC, we have 160 commission members and often have multiple votes at each meeting. Taking a roll-call vote on each of these would drastically extend our meetings for votes that are usually unanimous. We request that a change be made to afford us flexibility with recording votes, especially when there are no objections from the membership.

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you again for bringing up House Bill 257 for consideration. If you have any questions about the contents of my testimony, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at [wmurdock@morpc.org](mailto:wmurdock@morpc.org).

