



Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission Monthly Legislative Update

June 2021



MID-OHIO REGIONAL
MORPC
PLANNING COMMISSION

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What's Happening

Ohio Senate Works Toward Passage of State Budget

Following weeks of hearings, the Ohio Senate accepted a substitute budget bill (HB 110) on June 1st that would reduce income taxes by 5 percent across the board, or by approximately \$1.3 billion. On June 8th the Senate Finance Committee accepted an omnibus amendment and reported the bill out of committee.

In other highlights the Senate version of the budget also:

- » Exempts employment services and placement services from the sales tax;
- » Repeals the campaign contribution tax credit starting in tax year 2021;
- » Removes the House's proposed \$190 million Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program;
- » Removes requirements that licensed child care programs need to be rated through the Step Up to Quality program to provide publicly funded child care; and
- » Replaces the Cupp-Patterson Fair School Funding Plan with a plan that school funding plan will use teacher salaries as the basis for calculations and adds more than \$220 million on top of the House plan.

Notably for local governments, the Senate substitute budget bill extends the pandemic-related work-from-home municipal income tax provisions included in HB197 (Powell-Merrin) of the last General Assembly until December 31, 2021. However, individuals can file for a refund in tax years 2021 and 2020. According to the Legislative Service Commission (LSC), this change will likely result in revenue losses for municipalities while also increasing their administrative costs.

The retroactive changes to the temporary pandemic law affecting remote work has been criticized by the Ohio Mayors Alliance (OMA) with concerns that the provision could open the door to income tax refund requests from individuals working from home during the pandemic that would result in significant fiscal effects for many communities and slow Ohio's economic recovery. While OMA indicates that it may make sense to end the temporary law provisions on the tax treatment of municipal income tax withholding for employees that work from home, they strongly disagree with changing the law to allow individuals, temporarily displaced by the pandemic, to retroactively file refunds and causing significant disruptions to municipal government budgets.

In addition, the Senate substitute bill removed a House provision to extend the temporary authorization for public bodies to meet via electronic technology until December 31, 2021. Without this provision, public bodies, including MORPC, will be prohibited from conducting virtual public meetings on July 1, 2021.

MORPC Executive Director William Murdock submitted testimony to the Senate Finance Committee on June 4th to advocate that the Senate reinsert the provision to allow public bodies to have flexibility until the end of the year to be able to conduct public meetings virtually.

What's Happening

The Senate's omnibus amendment, added on June 8th, includes a provision of concern that would effectively ban local government broadband projects. More specifically, the language prohibits a political subdivision with a network from aggregating federal funds received at different times or using revenues and other public monies allocated for other residential or business services to fund or subsidize the construction, deployment, purchase, lease, or operation of broadband facilities, or the provision of broadband service to subscribers.

It is expected that HB 110 will be voted on by the Senate on June 9th, followed by the formation of a conference committee comprised of delegates from the House and Senate to negotiate over differences in each chambers version of the budget. MORPC will submit a letter to the conference committee strongly opposing this language that will be shared with members and encourage others to join in opposing the inclusion of this language in the budget.

Distracted Driving Legislation Gains Support

The Ohio General Assembly is currently debating legislation that would make distracted driving a primary traffic offense. Hearings began last month on HB 283 in the House Criminal Justice Committee with testimony from joint sponsors Rep. Cindy Abrams (R-Harrison) and Rep. Brian Lampton (R-Beavercreek). According to supporters, the bill reflects Governor Mike DeWine's proposal from the as introduced transportation budget that were later removed by the Ohio House of Representatives. A similar bill, SB 285 (O'Brien-Kunze) was introduced last General Assembly with strong support from the Governor.

House Bill 283 has the support of the Fix Our Roads Ohio coalition who believes the bill makes an important expansion beyond the current prohibition on texting while driving and allows for enforcement a primary offense. The legislation is scheduled for its second hearing (proponent testimony) on Thursday, June 10th in the House Civil Justice Committee. This week, MORPC Executive Director William Murdock will submit testimony supporting the bills passage.

In addition to HB 283, Rep. Mary Lightbody (D-Westerville) is the sponsor of HB 111, a similar piece of legislation that MORPC supports, which would increase safety on Ohio roadways by making it a primary offense to use handheld electronic devices while operating a motor vehicle. The bill has had one hearing in the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee.

Top News

Attorney General

Attorney General Dave Yost rejected the summary language for a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow individuals to sue state and local government entities, including law enforcement agencies and education institutions "for deprivations of rights, privileges or immunities" under the Ohio Constitution. The provisions included a prohibition on the use of qualified immunity and statutory immunity as a defense to actions brought under the amendment. It would also supersede any conflicting state and local laws, charters, and regulations or other provisions of the Constitution.

Census

Attorney General Dave Yost announced he reached a settlement in his lawsuit against the U.S. Census Bureau over the release of the population data needed for Ohio's upcoming redistricting process, with the bureau agreeing to release the data no later than Aug. 16. Under the terms of the agreement, the Census Bureau agreed to also provide biweekly updates regarding whether it still anticipates providing the data to Ohio by that date. Ohio will agree to dismiss the case if the bureau follows through with its promise to provide the data by Aug. 16.

Top News

Coronavirus

Gov. Mike DeWine discussed during his briefing how those who have not been vaccinated remain at “very significant” risk of COVID-19, in response to questions about a New York Times article on public health experts’ concerns regarding when or if national herd immunity will be reached here in the U.S.

With a highly effective vaccine widely available and a new, younger age cohort eligible, Ohio withdrew most pandemic restrictions on Wednesday, June 2. But Gov. Mike DeWine cautioned that many more Ohioans need to be vaccinated and announced plans for lucrative prize drawings to encourage uptake — \$1 million jackpots for adults and full-ride scholarships for children. Ohio Department of Health Director Stephanie McCloud removed health orders except those regarding nursing homes, assisted living facilities and data collection Wednesday, June 2.

Ohio now has hundreds of locations offering the Pfizer vaccination to those ages 12 to 15. Minors who are not emancipated will need parental consent for a vaccine, the governor’s office said, saying a parent or legal guardian generally should accompany minors to get the vaccine, unless administration is occurring in a physician’s office, school-based or school-associated clinic or similar setting.

The state’s new Vax-a-Million program requires vaccinated individuals to sign up to participate, Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Stephanie McCloud and Ohio Lottery Executive Director Pat McDonald announced. Permanent Ohio residents who have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine can sign up by visiting ohiovaxamillion.com or by calling 1-833-427-5634.

Vaccinations for Ohioans age 16 and older increased by over 28 percent during the weekend following the “Vax-a-Million” announcement, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) announced, reversing a 25 percent decline the previous weekend. May 14-16 represented the highest number of vaccinations for a Friday, Saturday and Sunday in four weeks, ODH said. Numbers are increasing for all age groups except those 80 and above who already had an existing high rate of vaccination.

Economic Development

Work to improve Ohio’s defense manufacturing processes is continuing, Gov. Mike DeWine and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted announced in a release, following a previous Department of Defense designation of the state as a Defense Manufacturing Community. Partners including the Development Services Agency (DSA) have been working with two companies to improve productivity and efficiency at their facilities, according to the release, and the goal of the three-year project is to help implement advanced manufacturing technology and create a more skilled workforce for at least 26 small and medium-sized defense manufacturers.

Elections 2021

Various media organizations reported light turnout as Ohioans went to the polls to weigh in on a number of local issues, and the secretary of state’s office reported few problems. A spokesman for Secretary of State Frank LaRose said that the most interesting development involved a squirrel chewing through power lines in Trumbull County, temporarily knocking out power at the board of elections, but it was quickly restored.

Rep. Allison Russo (D-Upper Arlington) announced that she will seek the Democratic nomination for the 15th Congressional District. Five current lawmakers and one former lawmaker are among those who filed to run in the 15th Congressional District special election by the deadline, with 14 candidates overall seeking to replace U.S. Rep. Steve Stivers (R-Columbus), who resigned to lead the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. The field includes 12 Republicans and two Democrats. The Republicans include Reps. Brian Stewart (R-Ashville) and Jeff LaRe (R-Canal Winchester) and Sens. Bob Peterson (R-Sabina) and Stephanie Kunze (R-Hilliard), all candidates who had previously announced their campaigns. The list also included former Rep. Ron Hood (R-Ashville), John Adams, Mike Carey, Eric Clark, Thad Cooperridder, Ruth Edmonds, Thomas Hwang, and Omar Tarazi.

Top News

Supreme Court Justice Jennifer Brunner announced Tuesday she will run for chief justice in 2022. Current Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor cannot seek re-election due to age limits. Justice Brunner, a Democrat, was elected to the high court in 2020 and started her six-year term in 2021. She is a former Franklin County judge and was also previously elected statewide to serve as secretary of state.

Employment/Unemployment

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), nonfarm payroll employment rose by 266,000 in April, less than what was predicted after a robust March report, while the unemployment rate ticked up slightly to 6.1 percent from 6.0 percent in March. The number of unemployed persons in April was at 9.8 million, which BLS said was little changed from March but was considerably down from April 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic shut down many businesses.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) announced that Ohio's unemployment rate was 4.7 percent in April, unchanged from March, as the state saw a 3,700 drop in jobs over the month. ODJFS said non-agricultural wage and salary employment went from a revised 5,312,000 in March to 5,308,300 in April, citing the latest business establishment survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in cooperation with ODJFS. The number of workers unemployed in Ohio in April was 273,000, up from 271,000 in March. The number of unemployed has decreased by 636,000 in the past 12 months from 909,000. The April unemployment rate for Ohio decreased from 16.4 percent in April 2020. The U.S. unemployment rate for April was 6.1 per-cent, up from 6.0 percent in March, and down from 14.8 percent in April 2020.

For the week ending May 29, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) reported 13,955 initial unemployment claims to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). That number is slightly higher than last week, when the department reported 13,661 new jobless claims.

Energy

A shutdown of the continental Canadian pipeline in the Great Lakes region will have a grossly disproportionate impact on Ohio's economic future compared to surrounding states threatened by Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's order to halt the flow of a half million barrels of crude oil and natural gas liquids through the upper and lower peninsulas to Ontario, Canada. That was the message of the Consumer Energy Alliance (CEA) on release of its 17-page report chronicling the economic importance of the 645-mile conduit, which links the Enbridge pipeline running from Alberta, Canada through the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba to Wisconsin, where Line 6 continues the journey to Ontario.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) must intervene to stop FirstEnergy investor and corporate raider Carl Icahn from exercising "clear control" over the Akron-based utility's expanded board of directors absent a separate inquiry by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), the nonprofit Public Citizen founded by Ralph Nader and the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) of Ohio said in a joint protest.

The House Public Utilities Committee accepted the "dash 3" substitute version of HB118 (Riedel-Stein), which addresses laws governing wind farms and solar facilities. Sen. Rob McColley (R-Napoleon), who said it is a companion bill to his SB52 and who acknowledged that he and his staff have been involved in the drafting of the sub bill, highlighted the major changes to the bill, which he said address concerns from residents and the companies seeking to build these facilities. Rather than have individual projects challenged, McColley said the sub bill permits boards of township trustees to adopt a resolution designating all or part of the unincorporated area of a township as an "energy development district" that would accommodate the construction of a large solar facility, large wind farm and an "economically significant wind farm" if approved by local voters. The bill requires this designation prior to the construction of any such facility in the unincorporated area of a township.

Top News

Environment

Legislation removing state government oversight of ephemeral streams would be a significant setback for Ohio's water quality, according to conservationists and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA). Ohio EPA Director Laurie Stevenson was among 30 witnesses providing testimony in opposition to HB175 (Hillyer) during the House Agriculture and Conservation Committee's meeting.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has awarded a total of \$800,000 in brownfields grants to entities in Ohio, the agency announced. The city of Girard will receive \$500,000, while Rural Action Inc. will get \$300,000.

Federal

The U.S. Department of Treasury published an interim final rule for distribution of COVID relief funding to state and local governments under the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act. Ohio is in line for \$5.36 billion, according to the federal agency, while local governments in the state will share in billions more. The department said states can expect half the money this month and the remainder approximately a year from now. The federal legislation provided \$350 billion for state, local, territorial and tribal governments. Guidance addresses permissible uses of the funding, which includes offsetting revenue losses as a result of the pandemic, as well as public health purposes, aid to sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, premium pay for essential workers and water/wastewater and broadband infrastructure. The federal law prohibits using the money for tax cuts or public pension systems.

Advocacy associations from around Ohio gathered to give a detailed look at how funding in the American Rescue Plan (ARP) will be used throughout the state. Hosted by Advocates for Ohio's Future (AOF), the event featured speakers from 10 different organizations who spoke on a range of issues from broadband expansion to housing assistance and a plethora of other issues.

Guidance released by the U.S. Department of Treasury puts the decision on Ohio townships' eligibility for direct local government funding under the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act in the state's hands. Three Ohio townships were previously deemed eligible by dint of having populations above 50,000 but the status of the other 1,305 Ohio townships had been unclear in the language of the ARP until the release of the guidance.

General Assembly/Statehouse

Governor DeWine signed HB2 (Carfagna-Stewart) the residential broadband expansion bill into law. The House also passed pandemic relief measures SB108 (S. Huffman-Romanchuk) and SB109 (Manning-Rulli), after the latter was amended in House Finance Committee to include an additional \$250 million. Also passing were HB37 (Manning), regarding prescriptions for life-saving medicines, and HB176 (Carfagna-Hall), regarding athletic trainers.

The Ohio Residential Broadband Grant Program created under HB2 (Carfagna-Stewart) represents the first major step toward the goal of giving every Ohio resident access to high-speed Internet, Gov. Mike DeWine said during his signing of the bill. DeWine noted that increasing Internet access was a goal for him and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted before their election. The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio's (PUCO) seventh chairperson in 10 years and second under Gov. Mike DeWine won Senate confirmation after the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee put some tough questions to Chairwoman Jenifer French earlier in the day. She was among a half dozen appointments approved en masse on the Senate floor but drew closer scrutiny in committee, where Chairman Bob Peterson (R-Sabina) said all or most members had met with her in the days leading up to the hearing. French said she hopes her experience as a lawyer, judge and locally elected official will help her serve the "public interest."

Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima) explained that he chose SB52 sponsor Sen. Robert McColley (R-Napoleon) as the new Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee chair because of his knowledge of the issues. Sen. Bob Peterson (R-Sabina) had asked to step down to concentrate on his run for Congress in the special election for the 15th U.S. House District, Huffman added.

Top News

Employers would no longer collect municipal income taxes based on where an employer is located, rather than where the employee is working under legislation that cleared the House. This could affect the bottom line of municipalities around the state, who had relied on language passed as part of COVID-19 relief bill 133-HB197 (Merrin-Powell) that allowed for the collection based on employer location to make up for the number of employees suddenly forced to work from home after the pandemic closed many businesses around the state. Rep. Kris Jordan (R-Ostrander) said the presumption when 133-HB197 was passed was that the shift for workers was temporary, and to continue to collect taxes in this way is “simply not fair to Ohio taxpayers.” He said HB157 (Jordan-Edwards) sets a clear date to end “the unfair withholding practices,” adding that the end date was a compromise between businesses and local governments.

The House also split on HB123 (Fraizer-Cross), modifying the law governing community reinvestment areas (CRA). Property owners who invest in real property improvements within a CRA may be eligible for tax incentives with an agreement with local authorities and property owners. Rep. Mark Fraizer (R-Newark) noted that the law is separated by two categories of whether the CRA was formed before 1994 when the law was changed or after. The bill passed 55-35 and included a floor amendment Fraizer said was technical in nature.

The Ohio Senate passed legislation that its sponsors said would give more local input into the power siting process for wind and solar projects, but it had bipartisan opposition. Sen. Robert McColley (R-Napoleon) said SB52 (Reineke-McColley) had been introduced in response to “clamoring” and “urgent requests” from local governments and citizens regarding the process. He said under current law, projects have been allowed to proceed despite near unanimous opposition to the projects on a local level. The sub bill passed 20-13 after having been reported out of the Senate committee where Ohio townships pushed back on this latest incarnation of the bill, saying the substitute version shifts home rule away from local communities to larger jurisdictions and abandons the original goal of the legislation.

Governor

Gov. Mike DeWine announced a number of staffing changes for his office, with current Chief of Staff Laurel Dawson assuming a new role as counselor to the governor. Policy Director Michael Hall will be the new chief of staff, while Ann O'Donnell, chief advisor to the governor, will remain in her current role.

Housing/Homelessness

Ohioans struggling to pay their rent, mortgage or utility bills will now have access to more assistance following Gov. Mike DeWine's signing of HB167 (Oelslager). A total of \$465 million from the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 will be appropriated in FY21 to the Ohio Development Services Agency (DSA) to continue administering its emergency rental assistance program.

Local Government

Capital-area electors will not be voting on an \$87 million clean energy referendum to “delegate the city's contracting authority to private parties,” in the words of the Ohio Supreme Court. Rejecting ProEnergy Ohio's primary bid, it said late Thursday that the petition committee nevertheless had proven Columbus City Council had abused its discretion in rejecting the proposed ordinance last November. Columbus must now approve the ordinance outright — unlikely — schedule a special election or place the “Columbus Clean Energy Partnership Fund” on this November's ballot. The city already has adopted an opt-out renewable energy plan with American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio that begins in June.

“There is a better way to define force account work,” Ohio Contractors Association (OCA) President Chris Runyan told the Joint Committee on Force Accounts, gathering with other members of the construction industry to push back on the argument that counties should receive a spending cap increase for in-house labor in order to complete more road, bridge and other projects with government employees.

Top News

Franklin County Commissioner Marilyn Brown announced she is retiring after more than 14 years as a commissioner. Brown was most recently reelected in 2018. Her retirement was effective on Friday, May 14. State law provides for the remaining two commissioners to appoint a replacement commissioner to serve for up to 45 days. Within that time, the departing commissioner's political party appoints a replacement to serve out the remainder of the term.

The Franklin County Board of Commissioners met for the purpose of filling the vacancy left by the recent retirement Commissioner Marilyn Brown and appointed Dawn Tyler Lee to serve in an interim capacity. Ohio law provides for the remaining two commissioners to appoint a replacement to serve until the outgoing commissioner's political party names a permanent replacement to fill out the rest of the term.

People

The Ohio Legislative Black Caucus (OLBC) recently announced that attorney [Steve Tugend](#) had been selected as chair of the caucus' corporate roundtable, which consists of leaders in the public and private sectors. In a release, it cited Tugend's expertise as chair of Kegler Brown Hill + Ritter Government Affairs.

Otto Beatty Jr., husband to U.S. Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-Columbus) and a former state legislator, has died at age 81. The funeral was held Friday, May 21. Memorial contributions may be made to Fire and Focus Scholarship Fund Inc., 175 S. Third St., Suite 200, Columbus, OH 43215. Event details and an obituary are available at <https://tinyurl.com/dfxuxjj>.

The Columbus Downtown Development Corporation (CDDC) and Capitol South Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation (Capitol South) will now both be led by Greg Davies as CEO and Amy Taylor as president, according to a release from the two organizations, following the May 31 retirement of President and CEO Guy Worley.

Public Safety

Members of the Fix Our Roads Ohio coalition voiced their support for new distracted driving legislation, saying it makes an important expansion beyond the current prohibition on texting and allows for enforcement as a primary offense. The bill was introduced as HB283 by Reps. Cindy Abrams (R-Harrison) and Brian Lampton (R-Beavercreek). Ohio Insurance Institute President Dean Fadel said the bill reflects Gov. Mike DeWine's proposal in the transportation budget, though those provisions had been removed in the House. It also reflects 133-SB285 (O'Brien-Kunze), he said.

In its third meeting since being established by Gov. Mike DeWine last year, the Ohio Traffic Safety Council continued to discuss ways to bring down traffic fatalities in the state after Ohio saw a spike in 2020, including targeting the issue of distracted driving. Dan Fitzpatrick, an assistant policy director in the governor's office, updated the council on HB283 (Abrams-Lampton), which would establish a ban on the use of hand-held devices while driving. Ohio Department of Public Safety Director Tom Stickrath had noted that the DeWine administration including himself had pushed the Legislature to pass such a ban as a part of HB74 (Oelslager), the transportation budget, but lawmakers removed it.

Redistricting/Reapportionment

Without minority party buy-in, a plan to extend constitutional redistricting deadlines is off the table, Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima) said, which was the last day lawmakers could have passed a resolution to put the issue on the August special election ballot. Huffman said at the time he wouldn't move forward with the idea if Democrats weren't on board — and they weren't. House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) and Senate Minority Leader Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights) instead suggested asking the Ohio Supreme Court to extend the deadlines. House Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) said it will be difficult to get redistricting done on the current deadline, adding the clearest way to resolve the issue was to move the deadlines in tandem to November, as well as addressing the one-year constitutional requirement of residency. The Ohio Supreme Court can't have jurisdiction yet because there is no violation of the constitution at this point, he noted.

Top News

State Government

The Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) plans to have state agency staff who work in its buildings begin a gradual return to in-person work starting Tuesday, July 6, according to Director of Communications Bill Teets. Agencies in facilities not managed by DAS are asked to follow a similar process. State employees will be transitioned back over the course of around three months “in a way that gradually loads the buildings back up,” Teets said. This is subject to the discretion of individual agencies that will also be able to consider the role teleworking can play in the post-pandemic workplace. These plans are subject to changes based on the current COVID-19 situation and health orders.

Taxation

Franklin County Court of Common Pleas Judge Carl Aveni has dismissed a conservative think tank’s lawsuit against the state of Ohio and the city of Columbus, finding that the General Assembly had the power to impose the pandemic municipal income tax changes made in 133-HB197 (Powell-Merrin). The Buckeye Institute challenged HB197’s withholding provision instructing municipalities to continue withholding municipal income tax at a taxpayer’s place of work, even if the taxpayer is currently working from home in a different local jurisdiction due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sen. Kristina Roegner (R-Hudson) gave sponsor testimony before the Senate Ways and Means Committee on SB97, her municipal income tax COVID-19 rules correction bill. Joining her were Tony Long, director for tax and economic policy for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce (OCC); and Greg Saul, director of tax policy, and Thomas Zaino, attorney, for the Ohio Society of CPAs (OSCPA). SB97 as submitted would simply repeal Section 29 of 133-HB197. Roegner spoke to an anticipated substitute version of HB197, which has been circulated but not voted on for acceptance.

Before reporting the bill, the House Ways and Means Committee accepted a substitute version of HB157 (Jordan-Edwards), legislation that would modify the municipal income withholding rules for COVID-19-related work-from-home employees, which committee chair Rep. Derek Merrin (R-Monclova) called a “reasonable and rational compromise” for a very “complex issue.” He stressed repeatedly that one of the main provisions “resolves the uncertainty” over when the 133-HB197 (Powell-Merrin) provisions would end by extending them to the end of the current calendar year, Dec. 31, 2021. He also repeatedly noted that the sub bill contains “no retroactive language” — it deals with the current tax year only.

Technology

The OhioX inaugural Tech Policy Summit featured a series of panel discussions, in addition to remarks by Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) and Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima). Speakers discussed the role of technology in advancing the state economy and what it provides to government agencies.

Transportation/Infrastructure

The Joint Committee on Force Accounts, created in the transportation budget to study the cap on the value of road projects local governments can perform in-house rather than through competitive bidding, issued an information report. The report summarizes the committee’s charge and compiles the testimony submitted to the panel, but does not include any recommendations on behalf of the committee.

Unemployment Compensation

Echoing the concerns of businesses who say they are having difficulties hiring employees, Gov. Mike DeWine said that his administration has informed the federal government that Ohio will stop participating in the program that provides unemployed residents an extra \$300 a week. The funding comes through the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program, and DeWine said he has told the U.S. Department of Labor that Ohio will cease its participation on Saturday, June 26, earlier than the September end date currently planned by the Biden administration.

Legislative Updates

Goal 1: Promote regionalism at the local, state, and federal levels of government fostering economic growth, prosperity, efficient use of resources, and a high quality of life for Central Ohio residents.

- HB43** PUBLIC BODIES - ELECTRONIC MEETINGS (SOBECKI L, HOOPS J) To authorize public bodies to meet via teleconference and video conference.
Current Status: 2/11/2021 - House Government Oversight, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-43>
- HB63** AMEND EMINENT DOMAIN LAWS (CUTRONA A, STOLTZFUS R) To amend the law regarding eminent domain and to declare an emergency.
Current Status: 3/2/2021 - House Civil Justice, (Second Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-63>
- HB66** REVIEW PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS (HOOPS J) To require the reporting of information on and legislative review of property tax exemptions.
Current Status: 3/10/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-66>
- HB71** EXEMPT CERTAIN HOUSING FROM PROPERTY TAXATION (PLUMMER P, HICKS-HUDSON P) To exempt from property taxation qualifying housing for individuals diagnosed with mental illness or substance use disorder and to declare an emergency.
Current Status: 2/23/2021 - House Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-71>
- HB77** PERMIT HIGHER ED BOARD OF TRUSTEES ATTEND ELECTRONICALLY (MANCHESTER S, SWEENEY B) To allow the board of trustees of a state institution of higher education to adopt a policy allowing the trustees to attend a board meeting via means of electronic communication.
Current Status: 5/26/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Workforce and Higher Education
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-77>
- HB110** OPERATING BUDGET (OELSLAGER S) To make operating appropriations for the biennium beginning July 1, 2021, and ending June 30, 2023, to levy taxes, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of state programs.
Current Status: 6/8/2021 - Senate Finance, (Tenth Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-110>
- HB143** REGARDS THE CLEAN OHIO PROGRAM (HILLYER B) Relating to the Clean Ohio Program and to make an appropriation.
Current Status: 2/24/2021 - Referred to Committee House Finance
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-143>
- HB228** STATE-ADMINISTERED MUNICIPAL NET PROFIT TAXES (ROEMER B) To make changes related to state-administered municipal net profits taxes.
Current Status: 6/2/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-228>

Legislative Updates

- HB237** REQUIRE ELECTRONIC MEANS OF RECORDING INSTRUMENTS, INCREASE FEES (HILLYER B) To require counties to provide an electronic means of recording instruments and accessing them, to allow county recorders to charge a document preservation surcharge, to increase recording fees for certain instruments, and to make an appropriation.
Current Status: 5/18/2021 - House State and Local Government, (Third Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-237>
- HB264** MODIFY TAX RULE FOR EMPLOYEES OF TEMPORARY WORKSITE (SMITH M, SOBECKI L) To amend Section 29 of HB197 of the 133rd General Assembly to modify the municipal income tax withholding rule for employees working at a temporary worksite.
Current Status: 4/22/2021 - Referred to Committee House Ways and Means
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-264>
- HB275** EXPAND POLITICAL SUBDIVISION JOINT PURCHASING AUTHORITY (LAMPTON B) To expand political subdivision joint purchasing authority to expressly include purchases for construction services.
Current Status: 5/12/2021 - House Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-275>
- HCR9** URGE TREASURY DEPARTMENT TO PROVIDE FISCAL RECOVER FUNDS TO TOWNSHIPS (SWEARINGEN D, HALL T) To urge the United States Department of the Treasury to provide fiscal recovery funds to townships under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Pub. L. No. 117-2.
Current Status: 6/9/2021 - House State and Local Government, (Third Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HCR-9>
- SB20** COUNTY UTILITY SUPPLY CONTRACTS (HACKETT R) To exempt county utility supply contracts entered into under a joint purchasing program from the 10-year maximum period for such contracts and to declare an emergency.
Current Status: 3/24/2021 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-20>
- SB24** FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS (GAVARONE T, PETERSON B) To enact the First-time Home Buyer Savings Act, authorizing income tax deductions for contributions to and earnings on savings accounts designated for the purchase of a home.
Current Status: 6/8/2021 - Senate Ways and Means, (Third Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-24>
- SB45** TAX INDUCEMENTS CERTAIN BUSINESSES (PETERSON B, KUNZE S) To enhance state and local tax inducements for businesses making substantial fixed asset and employment investments and their suppliers.
Current Status: 2/23/2021 - Senate Ways and Means, (Third Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-45>
- SB105** MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISES (SYKES V, SCHURING K) To require political subdivisions to recognize state certifications of minority business enterprises.
Current Status: 6/2/2021 - PASSED BY SENATE; Vote 33-0
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-105>

Legislative Updates

SB172 TAX CREDIT-NONRESIDENT TAXPAYERS (SCHAFFER T) To require municipal corporations with more than \$100 million in annual income tax collections to provide a tax credit to nonresident taxpayers.

Current Status: 5/4/2021 - Introduced

State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-172>

SB193 UNPAID WATER CHARGES (WILLIAMS S) To prohibit political subdivisions from placing a lien on property for unpaid water charges.

Current Status: 6/2/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Energy and Public Utilities

State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-193>

Legislative Updates

Goal 2: Achieve an advanced, inclusive, and exceptional transportation system that connects Central Ohio's people and products to the world.

- HB27** INCREASE PENALTY FOR FAILING TO SECURE VEHICLE LOAD (PATTON T) To increase the criminal penalties associated with failing to secure a load on a vehicle.
Current Status: 5/6/2021 - House Criminal Justice, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-27>
- HB47** ELECTRIC CAR CHARGING STATION GRANT REBATE (LOYCHIK M) To require the Director of Transportation to establish an electric vehicle charging station grant rebate program and to make an appropriation.
Current Status: 5/11/2021 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (Second Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-47>
- HB70** REVISE LAW FOR PASSING SCHOOL BUS (BROWN R) To make changes to the law governing passing a school bus.
Current Status: 5/6/2021 - House Criminal Justice, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-70>
- HB111** ALTER USE OF CELLPHONES WHILE DRIVING LAWS (LIGHTBODY M) To alter the law governing the use of a handheld electronic wireless communications device while driving.
Current Status: 5/11/2021 - House Transportation and Public Safety, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-111>
- HB141** MAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION APPROPRIATIONS (SKINDELL M, UPCHURCH T) To make appropriations related to public transportation.
Current Status: 2/24/2021 - Referred to Committee House Finance
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-141>
- HB283** EXPAND DISTRACTED DRIVING LAWS (ABRAMS C, LAMPTON B) To expand the texting while driving prohibition to a general prohibition against using an electronic wireless communications device while driving, with certain exceptions, and to create data collection requirements based on associated violations of the distracted driving laws.
Current Status: 5/20/2021 - House Criminal Justice, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-283>
- SB23** ILLEGALLY PASSING SCHOOL BUS (GAVARONE T) To impose a civil penalty when a driver who illegally passes a school bus cannot be identified, to designate the month of August as "School Bus Safety Awareness Month," and to designate this act as the School Bus Safety Act.
Current Status: 2/23/2021 - BILL AMENDED, Senate Veterans and Public Safety, (Third Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-23>
- SB32** ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION (RULLI M) To require the Director of Transportation to establish an electric vehicle charging station grant rebate program and to make an appropriation.
Current Status: 2/17/2021 - Senate Transportation, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-32>

Legislative Updates

Goal 3: Pursue sustainability solutions that protect and conserve our natural resources and promote a diverse supply of clean, affordable, and reliable sources of energy for our growing region.

- HB6** MODIFY LAWS GOVERNING CERTAIN PROFESSIONS DUE TO COVID-19 (ROEMER B) To amend Section 30 of H.B. 197 of the 133rd General Assembly to modify the laws governing certain health professionals and educator preparation programs due to COVID-19 and other circumstances and to modify the electric utility laws regarding energy efficiency programs; to amend the version of section 4729.92 of the Revised Code that is scheduled to take effect on October 9, 2021, to continue the changes to that section on and after that date; and to declare an emergency.
Current Status: 5/14/2021 - SIGNED BY GOVERNOR; eff. Immediately
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-6>
- HB10** REPEAL HB6 - REVISE ELECTRIC UTILITY SERVICE LAW (LELAND D) To repeal Section 5 of H.B. 6 of the 133rd General Assembly to make changes regarding electric utility service law, to allow the implementation of energy waste reduction programs, and to repeal certain provisions of H.B. 6 of the 133rd General Assembly.
Current Status: 2/17/2021 - House Public Utilities, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-10>
- HB18** REPEAL HB6 (LANESE L) Repeal HB 6 of the 133rd GA
Current Status: 2/17/2021 - House Public Utilities, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-18>
- HB57** REPEAL HB6 ENERGY LAWS (SKINDELL M, O'BRIEN M) To repeal the changes made by H.B. 6 of the 133rd General Assembly to the laws governing electric service, renewable energy, and energy efficiency and the changes made to other related laws.
Current Status: 2/17/2021 - House Public Utilities, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-57>
- HB175** DEREGULATE CERTAIN EPHEMERAL WATER FEATURES (HILLYER B) To deregulate certain ephemeral water features under various water pollution control laws.
Current Status: 5/25/2021 - BILL AMENDED, House Agriculture and Conservation, (Fourth Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-175>
- HB192** PROHIBIT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FROM STOPPING CERTAIN ENERGY GENERATION (CUTRONA A) To prohibit counties, townships, and municipal corporations from prohibiting energy generation from fossil fuels and gas pipelines.
Current Status: 5/6/2021 - House Energy and Natural Resources, (Third Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-192>
- HB201** PREVENT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FROM LIMITING NATURAL GAS USE (STEPHENS J) To prevent local governments from limiting use of natural gas.
Current Status: 5/25/2021 - Senate Energy and Public Utilities, (Second Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-201>
- HB245** EXPAND ELIGIBILITY - COUNTY SEWER DISCOUNTED RATES (INGRAM C) To expand eligibility for county sewer discounted rates or charges.
Current Status: 4/14/2021 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-245>

Legislative Updates

- SB19** WETLAND MITIGATION-PROPERTY TAX (SCHAFFER T) To establish a property tax exemption for certain property used for wetland mitigation projects.
Current Status: 3/16/2021 - House Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-19>
- SB29** ELIMINATE AUTO ENROLLMENT-UTILITY AGGREGATION (HOAGLAND F) To eliminate automatic enrollment in governmental electric and natural gas aggregation programs.
Current Status: 2/23/2021 - Senate Energy and Public Utilities, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-29>
- SB44** REVISE HB6 FROM 133RD G.A. (RULLI M, CIRINO J) To repeal the nuclear resource credit payment provisions, and amend, and rename as solar resource, the renewable resource credit payment provisions of H.B. 6 of the 133rd General Assembly.
Current Status: 3/9/2021 - Referred to Committee House Public Utilities
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-44>
- SB52** WIND TURBINE SETBACKS (REINEKE W, MCCOLLEY R) To require inclusion of safety specifications in wind farm certificate applications, to modify wind turbine setbacks, and to permit a township referendum vote on certain wind farm and solar facility certificates.
Current Status: 6/2/2021 - PASSED BY SENATE; Vote 20-13
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-52>
- SB89** RENEWABLE ENERGY (DOLAN M) To extend the renewable portfolio standard, increase solar energy benchmarks, and extend the property tax exemption for qualified energy projects that use renewable energy resources.
Current Status: 5/12/2021 - Senate Energy and Public Utilities, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-89>
- SB95** REGULATE UTILITY RESELLERS (MAHARATH T) To require refunds to utility customers who have been improperly charged and to regulate certain resellers of utility service.
Current Status: 3/31/2021 - Senate Energy and Public Utilities, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-95>
- SB96** PREVENT UTILITY DISRUPTION-COVID (WILLIAMS S) To prevent the disruption of utility service during the state of emergency declared regarding COVID-19 and to declare an emergency.
Current Status: 3/31/2021 - Senate Energy and Public Utilities, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-96>
- SB117** REPEAL LEGACY GENERATION PROVISIONS-HB6 (ROMANCHUK M, CRAIG H) To repeal the legacy generation resource provisions of H.B. 6 of the 133rd General Assembly and provide customers refunds.
Current Status: 5/12/2021 - Senate Energy and Public Utilities, (Second Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-117>
- SB127** PREVENT LOCALITIES-LIMIT USE OF NATURAL GAS (LANG G, RULLI M) To prevent local governments from limiting use of natural gas.
Current Status: 5/12/2021 - Senate Energy and Public Utilities, (Second Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-127>

Legislative Updates

Goal 4: Promote effective data policies and the equitable deployment of digital infrastructure that benefit Central Ohio communities.

HB2 REGARDS BROADBAND EXPANSION (CARFAGNA R, STEWART B) Regarding broadband expansion, including access to electric cooperative easements and facilities, and to make an appropriation.
Current Status: 5/17/2021 - SIGNED BY GOVERNOR; eff. immediately
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-2>

HB244 TECH BASED EDUCATION - MILITARY CHILDREN (WHITE A, LAMPTON B) Regarding technology-based educational opportunities for, and the enrollment of, military children.
Current Status: 6/1/2021 - Senate Primary and Secondary Education, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-244>

HB278 REVISE MARCS LAWS (HILLYER B) To make changes to laws governing the multi-agency radio communications system (MARCS).
Current Status: 5/4/2021 - Referred to Committee House Finance
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-278>

SB8 BROADBAND-ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EASEMENTS (MCCOLLEY R) Regarding broadband expansion, including access to electric cooperative easements and facilities, and to make an appropriation.
Current Status: 2/17/2021 - Referred to Committee House Finance
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-8>

Legislative Updates

Goal 5: Raise awareness or racial and social justice issues and work to continually improve communities within our growing region.

- HB72** DESIGNATE HISPANIC, LATINX HERITAGE MONTH (MIRANDA J, CUTRONA A) To designate September 15 to October 15 each year as “Hispanic and Latinx Heritage Month.”
Current Status: 4/21/2021 - House State and Local Government, (Second Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-72>
- HCR6** DECLARE RACISM PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS (HOWSE S, CRAWLEY E) To declare racism a public health crisis and to ask the governor to establish a working group to promote racial equity in Ohio.
Current Status: 3/17/2021 - Referred to Committee House State and Local Government
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HCR-6>
- HCR15** DESIGNATE BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK (BRENT J, HOWSE S) Designating the week of April 11 - April 17, 2021, as “Black Maternal Health Week” in Ohio.
Current Status: 4/14/2021 - Referred to Committee House Health
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HCR-15>
- SB78** JUNETEENTH-LEGAL HOLIDAY (CRAIG H, BRENNER A) To establish the nineteenth of June as Juneteenth, a legal holiday for which government employees receive paid leave.
Current Status: 2/24/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Government Oversight and Reform
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-78>
- SB125** BIRTH EQUITY (KUNZE S, MAHARATH T) To enact the Save Our Mothers Act regarding birth equity, peripartum racial and ethnic disparities, and implicit bias in the health care system and to designate May as “Maternal Mortality Awareness Month.”
Current Status: 3/10/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Health
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-125>
- SB137** PREGNANCY-ASSOCIATED MORTALITY REVIEW BOARD (KUNZE S, ANTONIO N) To modify the laws governing the Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review Board and to require birthing facilities to report data on severe maternal morbidity.
Current Status: 3/24/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Health
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-137>
- SB149** BIAS-MOTIVATED CRIME (MAHARATH T, ANTONIO N) To rename the offense of ethnic intimidation to bias-motivated crime; to expand the scope of bias-motivated crime; to require peace officer training on bias-motivated crime; and to require data collection and reporting on bias-motivated crime.
Current Status: 4/21/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Judiciary
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-149>
- SB170** OHIO DAY FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY (ANTANI N) To designate May 21st as “Ohio Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development.”
Current Status: 4/28/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Government Oversight and Reform
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SB-170>

Legislative Updates

SCR4 DECLARE RACISM PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS (CRAIG H, WILLIAMS S) To declare racism a public health crisis and to ask the Governor to establish a working group to promote racial equity in Ohio.

Current Status: 2/24/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Health

State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SCR-4>

SCR5 DENOUNCE RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION-COVID-19 (MAHARATH T, THOMAS C) To denounce all forms of stigmatization, racism, and discrimination occurring as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Current Status: 3/24/2021 - Referred to Committee Senate Health

State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SCR-5>

SJR1 PROHIBIT INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE-PUNISHMENT FOR CRIME (THOMAS C) Proposing to amend Section 6 of Article I of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to prohibit involuntary servitude in Ohio for the punishment of crime.

Current Status: 4/20/2021 - Senate Judiciary, (First Hearing)

State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SJR-1>

SR11 RECOGNIZING JANUARY 2021 AS NATIONAL SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH. (FEDOR T, KUNZE S) Recognizing January 2021 as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month.

Current Status: 2/2/2021 - Introduced

State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-SR-11>

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