



OHIO HOUSE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

June 8, 2026

Written Opponent Testimony House Bill 843

Chair King, Vice Chair Kishman, Ranking Member Sims, and members of the House Local Government Committee:

My name is Kent Scarrett, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Ohio Municipal League. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 843 on behalf of OML and the more than 730 cities and villages we represent across Ohio.

We respectfully oppose House Bill 843. At its core, this bill is a home-rule issue. The Ohio Constitution grants municipalities the authority to govern local matters and to determine the most effective ways to protect public safety within their communities. The Ohio Supreme Court has repeatedly recognized that the use and regulation of traffic cameras falls within municipal home rule authority. Decisions regarding traffic enforcement tools are best made by locally elected officials who are directly accountable to the residents they serve.

HB 843 would create a unique and troubling precedent by requiring voter approval before a municipality may utilize a particular law enforcement tool. While citizens already elect mayors, council members, and other local officials to make public safety decisions on their behalf, this bill would place one specific enforcement mechanism on the ballot.

That approach raises an important question: if municipalities must seek voter approval before using traffic cameras, what other law enforcement tools should be subjected to a public vote? We do not require ballot measures before communities purchase police cruisers, deploy body cameras, install traffic signals, hire additional officers, or adopt new policing technologies. The method by which a law is enforced has traditionally been an operational decision entrusted to local government and public safety professionals.

Municipal officials are elected to make these types of policy decisions after considering local conditions, crash data, public safety concerns, and staffing levels. Requiring a public vote on a specific enforcement tool injects politics into operational policing decisions and diminishes the authority voters have already delegated to their elected local representatives.

This bill also overlooks a significant challenge facing communities throughout Ohio: law enforcement staffing shortages. Many municipal police departments continue to struggle with recruitment and retention. Departments are frequently operating below authorized

staffing levels, forcing officers to prioritize calls for service, investigations, and emergency response functions.

Traffic cameras are not a replacement for police officers, but they can serve as a force multiplier that allows departments to address documented safety concerns in high-risk locations while limited personnel focus on duties that require direct officer involvement. Communities should retain the flexibility to determine whether such tools are appropriate based on their own circumstances.

Importantly, municipalities that choose to use traffic cameras remain accountable to their residents through the electoral process. Citizens who disagree with those decisions can voice their concerns directly to elected officials and ultimately at the ballot box during local elections. That accountability already exists without creating a separate voter-approval mandate for a specific public safety tool.

For these reasons, the Ohio Municipal League respectfully urges the committee to reject House Bill 843. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.