

Testimony on House Bill 53
The FY16 - FY17 Transportation Budget
House Finance and Appropriations Committee
George Johnson, President, AFSCME Local 1360, City of Akron Employees
February 25, 2015

Good Morning Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Driehaus and members of the House Finance and Appropriations Committee. My name is George Johnson and I am president of AFSCME Ohio Council 8 Local 1360 representing workers with the city of Akron. I also am a regional vice president of AFSCME Ohio Council 8 representing nine counties in Northeast Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on a concern we have with House Bill 53, the state's Transportation Budget.

The provision addressing residency requirements in House Bill 53 prohibits municipalities from using common sense methods in helping curb unemployment and cuts in local government revenue that can be used to reverse the economic downturn that has hit all cities and counties in Ohio. It limits the opportunities and the rights of citizens and local elected officials to reduce its financial burden and turn it into an investment in the community.

An example, the expense of the major sewer project currently underway in Akron will fall directly upon its citizens as well as local businesses. The city has proposed hiring a percentage of Akron residents to work on this project as an opportunity to use local funds that support local families and businesses and to grow the local and state economy. This provision in no way eliminates the hiring possibilities of workers from different parts Ohio or elsewhere in the country. Again, the goal here is percentages. No conversation that I have been a part of with mayor, city council or any other interested party has mentioned anything near requiring 100 percent participation of Akron residents working on this project. All correspondence and conversations have mentioned 20 - 25 percent initially and possibly 50 percent over time.

Also, it is my understanding that other cities have looked at this as an economic boost. Having a high percentage of residents from within the municipality has a variety of benefits. It is easier to track workers that live within the area as it relates to income tax collections and it assists with background checks; both of which save time and costs.

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Driehaus and members of the committee. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you about our concerns with House Bill 53. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.