



MAYORS RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

Policy Recommendations for 2023 from the Ohio Mayors Alliance to Members of the Ohio General Assembly and Ohio's Statewide Executive Officeholders

LOCAL INNOVATION.
STATEWIDE COLLABORATION.

OhioMayorsAlliance.org

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Dear State Leaders:

As a bipartisan coalition of mayors in Ohio's largest cities, we are pleased to present the following set of policy recommendations that will support our cities, enhance the important partnership between state and local governments, and strengthen public safety and Ohio's overall economic success.

In 2016, we formed a new organization of mayors in Ohio's largest cities and suburbs called the Ohio Mayors Alliance. We came together to speak with one voice about the issues that impact our communities and our constituents.

As mayors, we know the important role that cities play in creating jobs and building vibrant communities. We also know that investments in local communities will benefit the state overall and support our statewide economic success. We hope our state leaders in 2023 embrace this collaborative spirit and share our view that strong cities make a stronger Ohio.

As we look ahead to 2023, we believe there continues to be great potential for improved collaboration between state and local leaders. We also believe that now, more than ever, we must bridge our political divisions and work together to promote bipartisan cooperation and get things done for Ohioans.

As we look ahead to next year and beyond, we intend to work with state leaders on the following Mayors Recommendations for 2023:

1. Establish a formalized commission to improve collaboration between state and local governments and to address issues of home rule, revenue sharing, and other issues of common interest
2. Support public safety and enact reasonable state law changes to reduce gun violence and keep our communities safe
3. Work with cities to monitor the impacts of remote working on municipal tax revenue and study options to help address potential long-term revenue losses
4. Enhance revenue sharing and targeted grant funding to local governments to support areas of common interest such as public safety, infrastructure, and economic development
5. Promote bipartisanship, civic learning, and public service opportunities between the state, local communities, and school districts

We hope you will take a moment to review these recommendations in more detail. We look forward to working together in the new year to strengthen our cities and enhance Ohio's overall prosperity.

Sincerely,

Ohio Mayors Alliance Board of Directors

Mayor Dan Horrigan,
City of Akron

Mayor Bob Stone,
City of Beavercreek

Mayor Andrew Ginther,
City of Columbus

Mayor Christina Muryn,
City of Findlay

Mayor David Scheffler,
City of Lancaster

Mayor Tim DeGeeter,
City of Parma

Mayor Jamael Tito Brown,
City of Youngstown

MAYORS RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

RECOMMENDATION #1

ESTABLISH A FORMALIZED COMMISSION TO IMPROVE COLLABORATION BETWEEN STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF HOME RULE, REVENUE SHARING, AND OTHER ISSUES OF COMMON INTEREST

America's federalist system of government has long emphasized the value and authority of the government that is closest to the people. In this case, local governments, with duly elected leaders, are most representative of the varying local interests in different communities throughout this state—a fact the Ohio Constitution explicitly recognizes in Section 3, Article XVIII. It is critical to preserve this local authority. It is also important for state and local leaders to work together to enhance the overall interests of the state of Ohio.

To achieve this, we are proposing the formation of a Local Government Commission that would formally bring together a bipartisan group of state and local leaders with representation from across the state. This commission would serve as an important vehicle to enhance the collaboration and revenue sharing opportunities between state and local leaders, while also helping to preserve the principles of local control and home rule embedded in the Ohio Constitution.

The Local Government Commission should be explicitly balanced and bipartisan, with representation from leaders of both larger and smaller local governments, as well as legislative and executive-appointed members. It would serve as the clearinghouse for discussion and analysis of state and local issues of common interest, with a focus on home rule and revenue sharing.

The Commission would analyze and report on proposed policies and rules that would impact the Constitution's home rule authority. To ensure that it adequately analyzes the full range of proposed policies impacting home rule, the Commission would organize a Home Rule Advisory Subcommittee. The Subcommittee would be tasked with analyzing the impacts of proposed statewide legislation and policy changes and making recommendations to the Commission and legislative leaders on the home rule and local authority implications of such legislation.

The Commission would also examine and report on the impact of changes to state and local revenue sharing arrangements—such as the Local Government Fund, municipal and state incomes taxes, and state and local sales taxes. Most importantly, the Commission would serve as a formal collaborative body of state and local leaders who are focused on delivering smart, thoughtful, and bipartisan solutions to issues facing all Ohioans.

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SUPPORT PUBLIC SAFETY AND ENACT REASONABLE STATE LAW CHANGES TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE AND KEEP OUR COMMUNITIES SAFE

Public safety is the largest total expense for almost every municipal government in Ohio. For Ohio Mayors Alliance members, public safety costs are, on average, over half of cities' total general revenue expenditures. In the last few years, Ohio cities have invested in public safety with strong employment contracts and increased staffing levels, using American Rescue Plan funds to hire and retain officers. Cities have also been investing in training to improve policing practices, as well as tools to keep our officers safe. Yet, a common challenge has been the difficulty of recruiting and retaining high-quality law enforcement officers due to the demands of the job, public perceptions of the police, and the pervasiveness of illegal guns and gun violence in our communities.

To support local law enforcement's efforts to keep our communities safe, we must dedicate state funding for police training, create a stronger statewide licensing process for police officers, and work together to enact reasonable state law changes that will reduce the amount of gun violence in our cities and across our state. As a bipartisan coalition of mayors in Ohio's largest cities, and with support and guidance from our bipartisan Mayors and Police Chiefs Leadership Committee, we recommend the following:

► Allocate a dedicated state funding stream to municipalities and other local governments to **increase standards and provide resources for high quality training to all Ohio police officers**. The March 2022 recommendations of the Law Enforcement Training Funding Study Commission provide an explanation of the need for this funding and the impacts it will have across Ohio. As the Commission's report details, with funding, law enforcement officers across Ohio can receive annual continuing professional training. Additional funding will increase opportunities to improve professional training standards for local law enforcement agencies, especially those that need additional support or currently don't have adequate resources. We support the study commission's recommendations and look forward to working with state leaders to help pass and implement this new approach to support local law enforcement training in Ohio.

► Create a **professional statewide certification and licensing program** for law enforcement officers. In June 2020, Governor DeWine recommended implementation of such a program as part of a package

of reform recommendations. A statewide licensing program would help cities manage lateral transfers of officers from one department to another and would ensure that all of the state's law enforcement agencies have the information they need to ensure that their officers have gone through a rigorous professional licensing process. The Governor's recommendation should be adopted into law. We also recommend that lateral transfers be permitted for statutory cities, just as they currently are for charter cities.

► Join with 19 other states, including Indiana and Florida, to enact **extreme risk protection orders**, which prohibit access to and remove firearms from individuals who pose a significant danger to themselves or others. Current law prohibits certain people with violent criminal backgrounds

from obtaining guns, and implementing an extreme risk protection order system would provide a means of retrieving guns already in the possession of violent individuals who commit crimes or are adjudicated as being at extremely high risk of using their guns to harm themselves or others. Federal funding is available to help states implement this policy through the bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which passed in

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June 2022. As it stands, the fact that Ohio has not yet passed legislation to implement extreme risk protection orders limits Ohio's ability to compete for State Crisis Intervention Program funds.

► **Enhance Ohio's gun-purchasing background check system** and require that non-federally licensed dealers have the same obligations as licensed dealers in Ohio, which is to run a federal background check before a firearm purchase. Ohio should also utilize funding made available to states through the bipartisan Safer Communities Act to improve the submission of records into background check systems. These funds are also available to help law enforcement agencies in the state upload criminal and mental health records into the federal background check system in a timely manner.

► Implement a **statewide safe storage law** that prevents lawfully-owned guns from being stolen and becoming part of illegal gun trafficking practices that fuel gun violence. Properly secured firearms are less likely to be stolen and become part of the illegal gun trade. A safe storage and child access prevention law would also ensure that minors who live or spend time in homes with adults who own firearms cannot access those firearms. In the U.S., eight children are unintentionally shot every day due to improperly stored firearms, and 80 percent of firearms used in school shootings came from the shooters' homes. Safe storage laws also reduce suicide deaths. Adolescents with access to firearms at home are estimated to be 2.6 times more likely

to die by suicide. Safe storage laws codify practices responsible gun owners already do and help ensure that all gun owners have access to the information they need to make sure guns in the home are used only for their intended purposes. For all of these reasons, 23 states, including Texas, Florida, Iowa, and Wisconsin, have such laws in place.

► **Reinstate the statewide "duty to notify" provision to require individuals carrying a firearm to notify law enforcement when stopped, and allow local governments to impose certain gun safety measures to help protect their communities.** In 2022, Ohio repealed its concealed-carry licensing requirement and eliminated the long-standing provision that individuals must notify law enforcement officers that they are carrying a firearm. The Ohio Mayors Alliance remains opposed to the repealing of Ohio's concealed carry law and recommends the legislature, at a minimum, reinstate the duty to notify provision on a statewide basis. We also recommend that the state revisit Ohio's overly broad statewide preemption law (RC 9.68) that infringes on Ohio's constitutional right to home rule and prohibits local governments from enacting local gun safety measures. There are jurisdiction-specific measures that could be enacted locally such as extreme risk protection orders, safe gun storage laws, and others. Given that there is collective, bipartisan concern about crime and gun violence, the state government should no longer prohibit local governments from enacting reasonable provisions to keep local residents safe.

RECOMMENDATION #3

WORK WITH CITIES TO MONITOR THE IMPACTS OF REMOTE WORKING ON MUNICIPAL TAX REVENUE AND STUDY OPTIONS TO HELP ADDRESS POTENTIAL LONG-TERM REVENUE LOSSES

Remote working is a trend that was greatly accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is likely here to stay. The impacts of this could be significant for Ohio cities that serve as job centers, particularly for service industry jobs. While the potential impacts have not fully set in, Ohio cities are concerned that over the next few years a significant loss of non-resident commuters due to remote working could jeopardize cities' fiscal stability.

The Ohio Mayors Alliance has conducted extensive research on and continues to monitor the impacts of remote working. OMA published a report in 2021 that estimated that cities could lose an estimated 5 to 17 percent of income tax revenue annually. Fortunately, these projections have not yet materialized or resulted in a significant loss of municipal tax revenue. This is due in large part to higher-than-expected wage growth and economic activity. It is also probable that many large employers have not completely adjusted their withholdings to the actual locations where their employees

are working. Our primary concern is that when the economy normalizes and employers slowly begin to make these adjustments, many Ohio cities will start to see significant annual declines in tax revenue.

To address these concerns and the uncertainty of this issue, we urge state and local leaders to work together to monitor impacts and study options to help ensure the long-term fiscal stability of Ohio's cities. We are also asking lawmakers to resist major changes to the municipal income tax code in the short term that could create further uncertainty and fiscal instability for our cities. If cities begin to see significant revenue declines, our goal will be to work cooperatively with state leaders to find targeted ways to address these potential losses.

We urge state and local leaders to work together to monitor impacts and study options to help ensure the long-term fiscal stability of Ohio's cities.

As we monitor the impacts of remote working and consider potential solutions to protect the fiscal health of Ohio cities, we will also look for opportunities to improve the municipal income tax collection process. As we work with employer associations and other stakeholders, we have heard concerns about the complexity of the current system. While we must ensure that cities have the resources they need to deliver essential services like public safety, we also see opportunities to improve the system overall.

RECOMMENDATION #4

ENHANCE REVENUE SHARING AND TARGETED GRANT FUNDING TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO SUPPORT AREAS OF COMMON INTEREST SUCH AS PUBLIC SAFETY, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ohio cities are experiencing a unique moment in time with respect to resources because of a significant injection of federal money and opportunities created by the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Federal resources have helped cities avoid funding cuts to key services like public safety and have also created opportunities to invest in projects and spur regional growth. The state has also suballocated a portion of its American Rescue Plan funds through targeted grants in areas such as public safety, infrastructure, broadband, and brownfield redevelopment. We hope that these subgrant programs to local governments will continue as the state allocates its remaining ARP funds.

While ARP and IIJA resources have been incredibly helpful to our communities, these funds are one-time resources that will not last forever. We believe that it is critically important to continue targeted grant programs that relieve some funding pressure

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for cities and enhance common priorities between state and local governments. For example, cities across the state have struggled during the pandemic to recruit and retain police officers, and ARP grant funds allocated by state leaders are supplementing many cities' public safety budgets. But those funds will not fill these needs beyond 2024. Sustaining and enhancing state and local revenue sharing programs like the Local Government Fund is crucial to Ohio's continued success. State and local leaders must work together to ensure that adequate resources continue to be available

to ensure that cities can meet their obligations to their citizens and the first responders who protect them.

We recommend that the state continue to engage local leaders in identifying short-term investments into local communities with the estimated \$2 billion remaining in state American Rescue Plan funds, and to consider ways to sustainably fund long-term state and local priorities.

PROMOTE BIPARTISANSHIP, CIVIC LEARNING, AND PUBLIC SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN THE STATE, LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

More can be done when we work together, and we hope that will be the focus when the 135th General Assembly convenes in 2023.

As a bipartisan organization, we take very seriously the importance of working together and getting things done. We believe it is important to acknowledge and encourage bipartisanship at every level of government and we want to encourage our state leaders to do the same. More can be done when we work together, and we hope that will be the focus when the 135th General Assembly convenes in 2023.

We also believe we must recognize and encourage opportunities to promote civic learning and public service in our communities and throughout our state. Through our Education Advocacy Leadership Committee, we have convened mayors and school superintendents to explore ways cities and schools can partner to promote civic learning in our communities. In addition to fostering an important focus on workforce development, we also believe that civic learning and youth civic engagement create opportunities to develop good Ohio citizens and future Ohio public servants and business leaders. As we consider possibilities for local partnerships, we see even greater opportunities to scale this work by partnering with the state and fostering greater collaboration around workforce and citizen development throughout Ohio. We propose collaborating with state leaders to encourage and seed civic learning and public service opportunities for children and youth throughout our cities and state.



OhioMayorsAlliance.org

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