

**House Bill 101**  
**Ohio House of Representatives State and Local Government Committee**  
**Bonnie Batchler, Clermont County Commissioner, Proponent Testimony**

Chair John, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 101.

My name is Bonnie Batchler, I am currently one of Clermont County's three county commissioners. Before becoming a commissioner in January 2021, I had served for almost twenty years as a Pierce Township Trustee. It was my experience as a township trustee that first highlighted the need for a more clearly defined method of dissolving villages, particularly when they cross township lines.

The village of Amelia was located between Batavia Township and Pierce Township when it voted to dissolve itself in 2019. Despite a clear majority of residents wanting to dissolve the village (the dissolution measure received 68% of the vote), the process of formally dissolving Amelia dragged on for years with confusing and arguably illegal consequences. As late as November 2020, a full year after the village was dissolved, residents were still paying taxes to a village that did not exist. The mayor of the non-existent village continued to receive a taxpayer-funded salary.

As a Pierce Township Trustee at the time, trying to manage the consequences of Amelia's dissolution was a daily task. It wasn't immediately clear who we had to work with, since in the same election as the residents of Amelia voted to dissolve the village, they also elected a new mayor. Trying to figure out who the lawful mayor was of a village that no longer existed was about as difficult as it sounds. Unfortunately, due to the audit independence issue that they discussed in their proponent testimony, the Auditor of State couldn't give us straight answers regarding who had to be involved in the decisions making process.

Throughout the process, Pierce Township accumulated more than \$60,000 in legal bills trying to navigate the complex and confusing village dissolution process. In a given year, that would account for about 6% of the township's general fund budget.

I was glad to hear from Representative Bird and Representative Schmidt that they would be introducing this bill to make the process more clearly defined and to avoid altogether the question of who the lawful leadership is of a village that has been dissolved. By entrusting the process of dissolving villages to the Transition Supervisory Board, made up of the county auditor, the county recorder, and a member from the board of county commissioners, decisions can be made with clearer eyes and cooler heads.

Additionally, while I am speaking on behalf of myself with my experience as a Pierce Township Trustee and a Clermont County Commissioner, I would like to note to you that last week the County Commissioners Association of Ohio formally took a position to support House Bill 101.

I would like to thank Representative Bird and Representative Schmidt for diligently working on this issue and thank you Chair John, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee for giving this bill the attention it deserves and for allowing me to provide testimony in its support.

I will gladly answer any questions you may have for me regarding House Bill 101.