



SUNLIGHT
FOUNDATION

DATA _____
TRANSPARENCY
_____ **COALITION**

June, 2015

On behalf of the Sunlight Foundation and the Data Transparency Coalition we write in support of the DataOhio Initiative (HB 130) introduced by State Representatives Christina Hagan and Mike Duffey. This important proposal will enable greater access to public information and streamline cross-agency data-sharing.

The Sunlight Foundation is a nonpartisan nonprofit that advocates for open government globally and uses technology to make government more accountable to all. This work includes advocating for strong open data policies and implementation at the local level to support government openness. The Data Transparency Coalition is a trade association of technology and consulting firms advocating on behalf of the private sector and the public interest for the publication of government data into standardized, machine-readable formats. Our organizations believe DataOhio would provide citizens, governments, businesses and other stakeholders with easier access to public records while putting the state on a path toward newly emerging best practices for open data created by innovative local and state governments across the nation.

We support government policies facilitating searchable, sortable, and machine-readable databases, engaging in advocacy for 21st Century laws that make data available in real time. We believe that DataOhio's proposed plan to provide a framework for and encourage local governments to standardize and publish their data will improve government efficiency, allowing agency leaders to better evaluate spending and performance of state funds. As information is transformed from static documents into structured data, it becomes ripe for analysis. For example, when Michigan state agencies adopted a common data standard for the recipients of state funds, the state began saving \$1,000,000 per day by stopping payments to recipients who should not legally be receiving them. Simply, data standardization and publication improves government management.

The DataOhio Initiative would benefit the lives of Ohioans in many ways. By giving citizens improved access to government data, DataOhio would promote government accountability. When Ohioans are able to see exactly what their government is doing, they are empowered to hold officials responsible for making informed, practical decisions that benefit society. Accountability at this level doesn't just allow waste to be noticed and stopped; it discourages waste and improves agency management in the first place.

The online release of machine-readable standardized data through the open data portal would encourage public innovation, including the development of web-based tools to help solve community problems. Furthermore, the plan could create business opportunities and new jobs. The value of open government data as a resource for the technology sector cannot be overstated. For many companies in Ohio, such as Teradata, Streamlink Software, PwC, RR Donnelley, and others, open data is already central to their business. DataOhio would enable easier access to more accurate information.

The proposed bill lays out several activities that would streamline the open data process, including the establishment of a state website to house datasets, micro-grants to cities to encourage cities to begin opening data, and the creation of an advisory board that could recommend improvements to state and local open data initiatives. Having these components in place helps lay out a clear roadmap toward achieving best practices in open government data.

We ask that you support this bill, which opens the door for improved access to government data that will benefit the lives of Ohioans and the efficiency of the state's government.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss our position on this bill. Please contact Alyssa Doom of the Sunlight Foundation at adoom@sunlightfoundation.com or Justin Duncan of the Data Transparency Coalition at justin.duncan@datacoalition.org.

Sincerely,

The Sunlight Foundation
The Data Transparency Coalition