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To: Chairman Les Donovan, Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee
From: Amanda Lomax, City Clerk, City of Beloit
Subject: Written Testimony Opposing SB 316

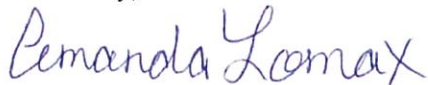
The City of Beloit respectfully disagrees with SB 316 Accelerating the tax lid implementation. Any tax lid on a local government imposed by the State is unreasonable in many ways:

- Undermines local government by ignoring that local residents elected individuals to represent them. Our governing body knows the needs of our community better than individuals at the state level - just like Washington does not have a full understanding of what is best for each individual state. Most local governments are very mindful in creating a budget for their community and have no desire to make it grossly expensive for citizens to live. At the same time, the governing body needs flexibility when it comes accommodating to the needs of the community they reside.
- The timing of the elections would have to start before cities receive budget numbers from the state and county. This makes it impossible to plan and increases local government's costs to hold a special election. Citizens elect a governing body for a reason.
- The City of Beloit has done numerous projects to update infrastructure and provide a quality of life that our residents want out of our community. We have new housing construction and businesses growing as a result. Any community who has plans for growth would be hard pressed to flourish if they have crumbling infrastructure. The state gas tax has declined considerably over the years and cities should have the flexibility to up mill levies if they desire to keep up with routine maintenance of our streets.

- The Consumer Price Index in the tax lid doesn't apply to local governments. The CPI applies to rising costs of household items such as (i.e., food, clothes, and housing). Cities spend money on building materials, concrete for infrastructure and building maintenance. The CPI does not apply to rising costs of items such as police vehicles and safety equipment for public safety. Cities have to keep up with equipment for liability issues as well. It wouldn't sit well with the public if officers are unable to respond to a call because of faulty radios or a broken down patrol car because the city was not financially able to update equipment as needed. The fire departments must keep up with equipment for a number of reasons. If they do not stay up to date our fire rating will be down-graded making property insurance more expensive to citizens and above all jeopardizing PUBLIC SAFETY!
- The State has cut off funds for individuals with mental health issues in police custody. Cities are now required to foot the bill for evaluations, temporary hospital stays, etc. It doesn't make sense for the State to make this a local government expense and then restrict local government's ability to fund said expenses.
- The City of Beloit participates with the Neighborhood Revitalization program along with the county. We have seen wonderful results with this program and would like to continue. Local businesses and residents in our community have invested millions of dollars over the years with the help of this program. While the tax lid states that growth programs such as this will not be affected, it actually will. The city budget that is required to be submitted every year must expense the cost of Neighborhood Revitalization on any funds that have to levy a tax. Cities have to up the mill levy to accommodate those expenses so the appropriate operating dollar amount can be calculated.

For these reasons, the City of Beloit opposes SB 316 and requests your support.

Sincerely,



Amanda Lomax

City of Beloit, City Clerk