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(Lancaster County)

June 9, 2014

The Honorable Senator John Eichelberger Jr., Chair
Senate Local Government Committee
Senate Box 203030
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3030

Re: House Bill 1845
Act 111

Dear Senator Eichelberger:

On behalf of Warwick Township Lancaster County, thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on House Bill #1845. The Township has gone through binding arbitration- the last time in 2008. I would like to comment on three aspects of the proposed revisions to Act 111. The first topic would be under Section 2, Composition. The revision wants to expand the pool of possible candidates for arbitrations from a pool of three to a pool of seven possible candidates. I support this change for it increases the chance of both sides selecting a truly objective neutral arbitration. The current selection process leaves a lot to chance that the neutral arbitrator is truly objective and neutral. The bigger candidate pool provides both sides a fairer process to select the important position of neutral arbitrator.

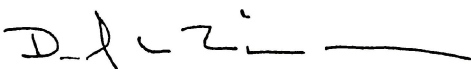
The second revision to comment on concerns Section (b) Meeting and Records. The revision would open the hearings to the public. We believe this would be a positive change. The public should be aware of what is occurring within these hearings. Many arbitration decisions have a profound effect on their municipality. The citizens should have an opportunity to hear each sides arguments. In a sense, the citizens pay for the results of these decisions. They should have the right to hear and understand how the Arbitration Board has reached their decision.

The third revision we want to comment on is under Section (a) General Rule. This revision would provide for both sides to share the costs for the third neutral arbitrator. In our own recent experience, Warwick Township incurred expenses of over 11,000.00 dollars for the cost of the third neutral arbitrator. It is a standard of fairness that both sides pay equal shares for this service. Both sides benefit from the service of the neutral arbitrator. Why should the taxpayer of any municipality shoulder the burden alone. We strongly endorse this change to Act 111. The fact that both sides would have to pay for this service will encourage greater effort to negotiate in good faith to reach an amicable agreement.

We encourage the legislation to make these revisions to Act 111. In these times of fiscal challenges, revising the Act 111 process towards a fairer and transparent process will benefit the citizens of Pennsylvania.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Daniel L. Zimmerman,
Warwick Township Manager