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## WHERE I STAND: LOCAL SPENDING CAPS

### AGAINST

I do not support the local spending limits bill, more formally known as the “Local Government Fiscal Accountability Act.” The bill would cap local government spending from year to year (with some limited exceptions) to inflation plus population growth.

Anyone who has been paying attention knows how opposed I am to government spending. For that reason, I was a co-sponsor of, and voted for the bill that subjects **state** spending to the exact same inflation + population limit. (That bill is now in the Senate.) I also have one of the strongest fiscally-conservative voting records in the House.

The difference for me --- and it is a significant one --- is that the current bill dramatically undermines the authority of local government. As admirable a cause as limiting government spending and growth is, it is not appropriate for the state government to be forcing it down the throats of local governments.

Local government is the foundation of our democratic republic. Local county and town councils and school boards provide both the bedrock for the democratic process, as well as a training ground of sorts for public leaders. Town and county councils are where the largest majority of people interact with government. Whether it be zoning, school policies, parks or something as ultimately local as potholes, *people get involved in local government*. And both they, and the system, are better for it. By becoming directly involved in the process --- going to meetings, working with neighbors, and talking with elected officials face-to-face -- citizens educate themselves on how the systems works (and often, doesn't work). They also learn how to make it better.

Neutering local government, which in effect is what this bill does, achieves no good end. Too often already, questions regarding local issues are often answered with a “we can't help you.” This bill would make that condition even worse.

Consider one possible outcome of this bill on a purely local issue: theoretically, County Council might unanimously approve, and the population of Lancaster County might support, adding paid professional fire fighters. Yet, if doing so forced County spending over the cap (which it likely would), doing so would be illegal.

People are already disillusioned with our system. Government has gotten so large, complex, and entrenched in bureaucracy, that individuals often feel like they cannot make a difference. Sadly, they are sometimes right. This bill would make that situation worse. And a disillusioned, unempowered citizenry is one of the worst prescriptions for the long-term health of our County, our state and our nation.

Do I think County Council or the School Board is perfect? Absolutely not. And they probably don't think that the State Legislature is perfect, either. And all of us are right. The power to make governmental decisions brings with it the ability to abuse that power. But I already hold the most effective tool to limit local government spending, just as voters hold power over me on state spending: the vote. That is the appropriate way to both impact our government and empower the citizenry, not this bill.

If the supporters of this bill are truly serious about limiting the growth of government and wasteful spending, they could join me and other conservatives in our efforts to fight this year's budget. My fear, however, is that while well intended, this bill is mostly just political cover: lawmakers can vote for this bill and say they are fiscally conservative...while quietly voting for the oversized budget. **Cutting somebody else's budget, while failing to tend to our own state finances properly, is the worst kind of governance.**

This bill might accomplish a desirable end, but it seeks to do so at too high a cost. How we spend our money in Lancaster and York Counties is, in the end, none of the state's business.