

**My name is Susan Hockenberry and I am the Executive Director of Local Government Academy (LGA), and I thank you for allowing me to provide comments today to the Senate Local Government and Senate Urban Affairs and Housing Committee.**

**LGA is a independent, nonprofit collaboration of business, government, civic and academic leaders that promotes excellence in local government. LGA serves all of southwestern Pennsylvania and has been in business since 1983. Its funded in almost equal thirds from state and county contracts and grants, foundations and corporate donations, and user fees and 2/3 of all LGA program participants are either government officials or employees, and 1/3 is individuals from the broader community.**

**LGA, in pursuit of a mission to promote excellence in local government, has 4 goals:**

- promote a strong a responsive local government system**
- develop local leaders**
- educate public officials, employees and citizens**
- build collaboration and partnerships.**

**To accomplish these goals, we offer 3 services: training, technical assistance and interns.**

**Towards the goals to promote a strong and responsive local government system and to build collaboration and partnerships, LGA offers a multi-municipal planning grant program. The grant program places a priority on projects that demonstrate an urgent environmental, economic or social need. Projects must be multi-municipal, and the work product must be a comprehensive plan or an implementing device of a comp plan, such as an ordinance. I have provided a listing of projects funded and there current status. The projects are at various states of progress and you may review the list at your convenience, but the purpose of my comments today is not to tell you about LGA or the multi-municipal planning grant program, but to comment on the Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program, or LUPTAP, and how it can serve as a catalyst for investment in local communities.**

**The LGA multi-municipal planning grant program functions as a match to the LUPTAP funds. Teams of municipalities may receive up to \$7,500 per municipality in support of their multi-municipal planning efforts from LGA. So for even the smallest teams, two municipalities, the LGA grant funds potentially \$15,000 in planning activity. As the number of communities grows, the funding grows exponentially. This often times substantially funds the municipality's local share for their LUPTAP approved project.**

**This speaks to the value of the state's LUPTAP program. Not only has the Commonwealth's LUPTAP support contributed to community development initiatives at the local level, it has also leveraged additional private investment through this program. To date, the LGA's grant program has provided almost \$500,000 in grants to municipalities in southwestern Pennsylvania with funds provided by foundation services. Additionally, the Commonwealth priority that the LUPTAP program supports in this case, the multi-municipal planning amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code, has also stimulated support for LGA to offer additional training and facilitation services for municipalities. So from LGA's point of view, this combination of a well aligned**

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funding program with improvements to the aMPC is the combination our Commonwealth needs to pursue on a more robust nature.

That pursuit could take many forms. Obviously, greater funding to the LUPTAP program could accelerate community development activities. But additionally, funds specifically supportive of multi-municipal planning within LUPTAP is needed. Currently, multi-municipal projects must compete with other important community development initiatives that are not necessarily multi-municipal comprehensive plans, but valuable to communities nonetheless. The point here is not to reduce support to those efforts, as LUPTAP has a broader mandate that just supporting multi-municipal activity, but to further incentivize multi-municipal planning.

Additionally, and in line with incentives, priority for projects identified through multi-municipal comprehensive planning from other Commonwealth departments and agencies should occur, as well as greater resources for the Department of Community and Economic Development to evaluate and assess the viability of potential projects and to assure that intergovernmental and community development objectives are being met—including coordination with not only other state agencies, but planning done on the regional level—by agencies such as the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission or County planning offices. All of this activity has the potential to stimulate more private investment in local governments—because local governments will be more clearly pursuing broad regional goals.

Beyond financial support, engaging political leadership in a constructive dialogue about the needs of communities and the effectiveness of the Municipalities Planning Code at meeting those needs, must occur across the state, engaging not only government officials but planning professionals and community groups focused on missions to promote economic vitality, environmental quality and social equity. Both technical issues related to zoning, subdivisions, overlay districts and the like should be addressed as well as qualitative matters such as the importance of local planning in providing effective services to local communities. Reframing the discussions about planning as an activity about control, to an activity about providing quality governance that constituents are entitled to, is needed.

It is these attitudinal changes that I want to switch to now, in the hope that your committee and the legislature can provide needed leadership. While LGA does not have direct survey information about attitudes about multi-municipal planning, it does have experience in working the communities engaged in multi-municipal planning and a bead on what makes projects succeed and what happens when they fail. Additionally, LGA conducted a survey in 2006 of attitudes about intergovernmental cooperation, which while not scientific, provides some insight.

What we have learned is there is a gap between what is seen as beneficial and what is seen as likely. I provided a summary of those results in advance of my testimony today and I will not review them in detail at this time, unless you have questions. The essence of that information is not negative. In fact when asked, the majority of respondents

indicated that all services, when provided intergovernmentally, provide some or substantial benefit vs no benefit or negative effect. Likewise, the majority of respondents indicated that their municipality would be likely or very likely to offer services intergovernmentally. But there was a gap. Closing the gap should be a bi-partisan priority of the Commonwealth.

Your leadership on this, as well as well targeted funding, cooperation with the municipal associations, assistance from the states great academic institutions, professional organizations serving local governments will help to motivate that change in attitudes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.