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# OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research  
and Drafting

Legislative Budget  
Office

**H.B. 274**  
**136<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**

## Bill Analysis

**Version:** As Introduced

**Primary Sponsors:** Reps. D. Thomas and T. Hall

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### SUMMARY

- Requires townships and municipal corporations to provide firefighting services and emergency medical services beginning January 1, 2026.
- Establishes the Fire and EMS Shared Services Reimbursement Grant Program.

### DETAILED ANALYSIS

#### Required services

The bill requires townships and municipal corporations (cities and villages) to provide firefighting services and emergency medical services (EMS); the bill does not address police services.<sup>1</sup> Currently, townships are not required to provide police or fire/EMS services (except limited home rule townships must provide police services).<sup>2</sup> Municipal corporations have constitutional home rule authority<sup>3</sup> under which they may provide police or fire/EMS services; cities following the general statutory plan have police and fire departments each led by a chief,<sup>4</sup> while villages following the general statutory plan have a police department and a “fire prevention officer.”<sup>5</sup>

The bill’s requirement for townships and municipal corporations to provide fire and EMS services allows the use of existing methods. Townships and municipal corporations currently provide these services in a variety of ways: directly; via a township fire district (municipal

<sup>1</sup> R.C. 9.51.

<sup>2</sup> R.C. 504.16, not in the bill.

<sup>3</sup> Ohio Constitution, Article XVIII, Section 3.

<sup>4</sup> R.C. 737.02, not in the bill.

<sup>5</sup> R.C. 737.15 and 737.22, not in the bill.

corporations can participate in these); via joint districts with other townships or municipal corporations; via contract with other townships or municipal corporations; or via contract with a private entity.<sup>6</sup> Townships and municipal corporations may utilize one or more of these methods to satisfy the bill's requirement. Townships would be required to provide the services only in the unincorporated portion of the township.

The bill's requirement takes effect on January 1, 2026. There is no penalty in the bill for a township or municipal corporation that fails to satisfy the requirement.

The bill does not apply to counties. Continuing law requires counties to elect a sheriff<sup>7</sup> and allows counties to provide EMS services directly, via a joint district with another county, or via contract.<sup>8</sup> Counties do not have general authority to provide fire services but might be able to do so via contract with a political subdivision that does have fire authority.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, if the requirement to maintain fire/EMS services were challenged, a court might examine it with respect to municipal home rule. If a court found the requirement relates to a procedural matter of local self-government, it might find it applies only to the cities and villages following the statutory plan of government. If a court found the requirement relates to police power or a substantive matter of local self-government, it might find the requirement could interfere with municipal home rule authority of all municipal corporations.<sup>10</sup>

## Grant program

The bill establishes the Fire and EMS Shared Services Reimbursement Grant Program. The State Fire Marshal must administer the program and provide grants to townships and municipal corporations that share fire/EMS services. A township or municipal corporation is eligible to receive a grant if, on or after January 1, 2026, the township or municipal corporation joins a new or existing district (or a regional council of governments, RCOG), or enters a new contract for joint services with another governmental entity (the contract cannot be substantially similar to an existing or recently expired contract). Each eligible township or municipal corporation applies independently and can receive one grant to reimburse 50% of its eligible expenses, up to \$100,000. This includes equipment, training, or personnel expenses incurred within the year after joining the district/RCOG or entering into the contract; the reimbursement also can include expenses related to joining the district/RCOG or entering into a contract, including related election expenses. A township or municipal corporation must apply for the grant during its

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<sup>6</sup> R.C. 505.37 and 505.84 (township; township fire district); Chapter 737 (municipal); R.C. 505.371 (joint fire districts); R.C. 505.375 (joint fire and ambulance district); R.C. 505.71 (joint ambulance district); and R.C. 9.482, 9.60, and 505.44 (contracts), not in the bill.

<sup>7</sup> R.C. 311.01, not in the bill. A charter county must provide the services of a sheriff (Chapter 311) but can utilize an appointed position or other methods of providing those services. Ohio Const., art. X, sec. 3.

<sup>8</sup> R.C. 9.482, 9.60, and 307.05 *et seq.*, not in the bill.

<sup>9</sup> R.C. 9.482, not in the bill.

<sup>10</sup> For more information about municipal home rule, please see [LSC's Municipal Home Rule Members Brief \(PDF\)](#), available at [lsc.ohio.gov](https://lsc.ohio.gov).

second year of participating in the joint services. For instance, a township that joins a joint district on September 1, 2026, must apply between September 1, 2027, and September 1, 2028, to reimburse expenses incurred in joining the district and to reimburse equipment, training, or personnel expenses incurred September 1, 2026, to September 1, 2027. The grants are subject to the availability of funds; the bill does not include an appropriation.<sup>11</sup>

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## HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	05-14-25

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<sup>11</sup> R.C. 9.511.