



**Representatives Lipps and Miller  
Sponsor Testimony on HB 482  
The Ohio House Civil Justice Committee**

Rep. Lipps

Thank you Chair Butler, Vice Chair Lanese, Ranking Member Boggs & members of the House Civil Justice Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to speak regarding House Bill 482. This bill will provide communities with tools to better combat local blight in order to meet local needs and demands. Blight includes anything from abandoned property that presents a threat to public safety to property that harbors suspected/witnessed criminal and/or illegal activity.

As communities attempt to deal with the unprecedented challenges of recent economic downturns combined with the opioid/heroin epidemic, one of their increasing struggles is combating the urban blight these crises have brought. Too often, absentee landlords have negligently rented out or abandoned their property creating hotbeds for public nuisances and threats to public safety including creating havens for illegal drug trafficking, prostitution, and other threats to health and public safety. Absentee landlords and those who exploit these properties have learned to game the legal system that often includes long, drawn out proceedings before communities can cleanup and reclaim these properties in order to improve their neighborhoods.

The bill will expedite legal action against negligent landlords and the threats to public health and safety they bring. In such instances where communities sue, the pre-filing-notice requirement for actions regarding blighted property will be reduced from 60 to 30 days. And the minimum time between filing and the first hearing will be reduced from 28 to 14 days, while the maximum time for a property owner to comply with an injunction requiring abatement, absent good cause shown, will be reduced from 30 to 14 days. The bill also reduces the minimum time for the court to hold a first hearing from 28 to 14 days after a complaint is filed. When a property owner fails to comply under the new timelines, a new offense will be established in order to help compel and expedite remediation or other court ordered remedies.

I would like to thank the committee for their time and consideration and will now hand the microphone to Rep. Miller for further testimony.

Rep. Miller:

Thank you Chairman Butler, Vice Chair Lanese, Ranking Member Boggs and members of the committee.

I also want to thank Representative Lipps for his dedication and his work with me on this bipartisan effort to help our districts combat urban blight

Representative Lipps has laid out the challenge very clearly as well as a summary of the bill and how it will work to speed up the process for nuisance actions. As he mentioned, we are trying to give citizens more power and go after those who work the lengthy legal process as a way to stay one step ahead of law – to the detriment of their communities.

Urban blight is an undeniable problem in our districts. And, I hear every day from constituents and have seen these conditions first hand – again and again.

Simply put, tighter timelines afford legal protections but it levels the playing field for communities left powerless to those few landowners who allow their properties to become cancers for entire neighborhoods.

These tools include expedited legal action against negligent landlords. The courts currently have the tools to protect well meaning landowners who work in good faith to keep their land in line with community standards. This bill would not change that fundamental protection.

Nor does it change the underlying nuisance laws in the Ohio Revised Code.

It simply speeds up the process and holds those accountable who fail to follow a court's order to get property in line with minimal health and safety standards.

I thank the committee again for your time and your willingness to give this issue your attention. Representative Lipps and I would be happy to answer any questions.