

Testimony in Support of HB 633

Delivered to the State and Local Government Committee

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Chair Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes and other representatives of the State and Local Government Committee; I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 633; legislation to help clean up/restore communities more quickly and effectively by strengthening penalties for littering property.

My name is Lisa Boggs. I am a 58 year resident of Columbus Ohio with 34 years living in the Hilltop area and 28 years residing on South Ogden Avenue. I have spent the last 21 years working diligently pretty much full time hours or more for no pay, to restore my community through block watch, community work and cleanup activism. Neighborhood involvement and making our little corner of this earth a better place to live is basically my life's mission.

I realized early in my advocacy, that trash and blight are at the root of many neighborhood ills. When a community is trashed and unkempt, criminals think no one cares. They move right in and take over. Blight inspires crime while adding to the feeling of despair and hopelessness while giving off a bad vibe; not to mention, it spreads disease.

17 years ago, we began organizing neighborhood cleanups while spreading awareness about the negative aspects of trash, not only because of littering but also from garbage being piled up in alleys or dumping on properties. Much of this blight is caused by landlord setouts, cleanouts and rehabs (I submitted several dozen photos to Rep Miller for you to view of the blight we have addressed and there are hundreds more pictures in my files).

Not only have we have organized cleanups, picked up trash with our own grabbers/buckets, we have formed a strong bond and work closely with our City of Columbus Refuse Division doing our best as a team to address trash issues as they arise; things are getting much worse, however. And so is the community as a whole. We simply have no other choice but to ask for help from our leaders/legislators in hopes they will come up with solutions/legislation to address the trash issue that is punishing and destroying our community.

HB 633 is a beginning that will help keep our communities safe and clean by strengthening the laws and establishing swifter criminal penalties; state laws should reflect the effort it takes to keep communities clean.

I would like to again thank the committee, especially Reps Boggs and Miller for their work on the important trash issue that gravely influences the health and vibrancy of our struggling neighborhoods. I am hopeful because they see the forest for the trees. In this case, they see the trash that is stifling our communities so that full potential can't be realized.