

## **HB 633- Proponent Testimony**

House State and Local Government Committee  
William Huffman, Friends of the Hilltop

Chair Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 633. My name is William Huffman and I serve as Operations Manager for Friends of the Hilltop, a community organization which aims to create a sense of well-being through environmental improvement and beautification efforts, thus creating ownership and empowering civic pride in the Greater Hilltop area.

I have lived on the Westside of Columbus my entire life and proudly participate in many civic organizations including the Greater Hilltop Area Commission and the Hilltop Kiwanis. I have witnessed the deep and devastating impacts of economic decline, the opioid epidemic, and uneven investment in the Hilltop community, including vacant and abandoned lots, trash, overgrown lawns, and graffiti.

Friends of the Hilltop works passionately to address these issues of blight through community clean-ups, lot remediation, and other beautification efforts. However, our organization and other engaged community members cannot entirely address the quantity and complexity of reasons for debris and litter in our community. HB 633 would provide the support and tools we desperately need to help combat the physical deterioration of our neighborhood so that we can build a brighter, more beautiful future for the Hilltop. Our neighborhood, like others in Columbus and across the state, suffers from the effects of absentee landlords which allow litter and debris to accumulate on their properties not only creating an eyesore, but a public health hazard and furthering an environment which promotes a lack of ownership and pride in the neighborhood. Engaged and hardworking organizations like Friends of the Hilltop have little recourse to deal with properties like this.

HB 633 would provide legal backing in our pursuit of a cleaner and safer Hilltop- an issue with which our community members have a strong history of passion and engagement. I urge your support of this legislation so that municipalities and community leaders like myself have the resources to criminally penalize absentee and apathetic landowners for not doing their part in keeping the neighborhood which I love safe and healthy. I'd be happy to answer any questions at this time.