

## House Bill 288

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for HB 288.

Our Parks system in Stark County is very aggressive in it's pursuit of land acquisition and has continually ignored the concerns of land owners. One of the concerns property owners have is that they display our properties on future trail maps. The parks publications and brochures indicate that these trails will be completed by certain dates. When park employees are asked that if the landowners have no intention of selling their property do they plan on invoking eminent domain, it is always followed with "the parks have never used this". The fact is they have verbally threatened some land owners with it. With the power of eminent domain, land owners are left to assume that their property will be taken which leaves future plans in jeopardy.

I would like to read the first section of Ohio Revised Code 1545.11:

"The board of park commissioners may acquire lands either within or without the park district for conversion into forest reserves and for the conservation of the natural resources of the state, including streams, lakes, submerged lands, and swamplands, and to those ends may create parks, parkways, forest reservations, and other reservations and afforest, develop, improve, protect, and promote the use of the same in such manner as the board deems conducive to the general welfare."

The majority of properties the Stark Parks District wish to acquire are long since abandoned railroad beds which are privately owned. I fail to see where this type of property fits into that description. By taking these lands what the parks will actually do is bisect prime farmland. In some cases they have already created land-locked parcels and are refusing access across the trails. Once these trails are created along crop fields the risk to farming procedures is created. A farmer has to be concerned with spraying fields, drainage tile maintenance, trespassers, and injury liability, to name a few.