

Cleveland Municipal Court

HOUSING DIVISION
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June 12, 2019

The Honorable Larry Householder
Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High Street, 14th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

**Re: Support for HB 252
Create the Land Reutilization Demolition Program**

Dear Speaker Householder:

I am writing to inform you that I support this bill. Since the Cuyahoga County Land Reutilization Corporation (“CCLRC”) was created in 2010, it has demolished over 7,800 structures. The CCLRC averaged over 1,100 demolitions from 2016 to 2018. Most of these demolitions are at properties that churned at the bottom of Cuyahoga County’s housing market before the CCLRC existed. For the past 10 years, the CCLRC has taken these highly distressed properties off the market through state forfeitures and tax foreclosures through the County Board of Revision.

The CCLRC was able to operate a robust demolition program because it had significant funding from programs like the federal Hardest Hit Fund, then-Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine’s Moving Ohio Forward program, and Cuyahoga County’s Demolition Fund. Those funds are currently exhausted or nearly so, and there is no large funding source currently available for the CCLRC to continue its critical demolition program.

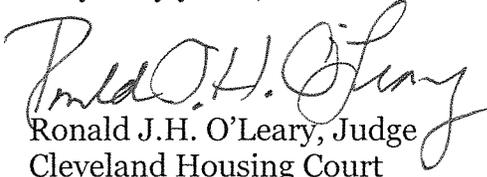
My staff and I frequently refer defendants in Cleveland Housing Court to the CCLRC. These defendants may be a homeowner who thought she lost her home years ago in a foreclosure or bankruptcy. Or they may be children or grandchildren who inherited a family home that suffered years of deferred maintenance. Now the costs to repair the home far exceed the value it would have once all the issues are fixed.

I also see the homes that need to go to the CCLRC when I review requests by Cleveland inspectors for search warrants to inspect vacant homes. Each week, I review warrant requests for boarded, vacant homes with issues like collapsing roofs, failing foundations, and leaning garages. These properties are often \$60,000 or more behind in property taxes. There are hundreds—and maybe thousands—of properties like this that should go to the CCLRC for demolition. That would eliminate the blight and stabilize our housing market. But that can’t happen right now due to a lack of demolition funding for the CCLRC.

I see the impact of the lack of funds each week. That is the reason why I am writing to let you know I support HB 252. I thank Representative Greenspan for his leadership on this critical issue for Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, and all of Ohio. I hope that you and the rest of the General Assembly pass this bill so that the CCLRC and over 50 other county landbanks have the funding that they need to remove blighted structures and stabilize our housing stock.

If you have any questions for me, please contact me at 216.664.3255 or olearyr@cmcoh.org.

Very truly yours,


Ronald J.H. O'Leary, Judge
Cleveland Housing Court

Copies (by e-mail only):

The Honorable Phillip M. Robinson, Jr., House District 6
The Honorable Thomas F. Patton, House District 7
The Honorable Kent Smith, House District 8
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