



April 30, 2019

The Honorable Rep. Paul Zeltwanger  
Ohio House of Representatives, 54<sup>th</sup> District  
77 S. High St., 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Zeltwanger,

I am writing you today to express proponent support for Ohio House Bill 98, which would reintroduce the Rural Industrial Loan Fund program, and appropriate \$25 million to the program in FY 2020.

Buckeye Hills Regional Council is a Council of Governments providing services to eight Appalachian Counties in Southeastern Ohio including Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, and Washington Counties. This region is home to 260,000 residents and over 7,000 establishments of business employing 80,000 individuals.

Working with partners across the region, the concern regarding available building and sites for development has been a growing conversation. Buckeye Hills has been fully engaged in this conversation since 2013, retaining a full-time position focused on providing assistance to local governments and the management of their site inventories. While this effort has been meaningful for beginning to address the challenge, additional resources for new targeted site and building development have been lacking. Much of the high-value site inventory available in the Buckeye Hills region is legacy property remaining from heavy industry in the region from decades past. While many of these properties are excellent for similar use matches, many are not suitable or ready for timely deployment. Assistance in developing new assets that can be more closely aligned with current opportunities would of significant value to local communities. To provide an example of these challenges, 83 statewide leads were received by Buckeye Hills staff for consideration in 2017 and 2018. In reviewing these leads with local officials, Noble County possessed sites and assets that could have met the initial site search criteria for six (6) of these leads. In order for Noble County and other areas in the Buckeye Hills region to overcome this competitive disadvantage, additional assistance and resources are needed. Reinstating the Rural Industrial Park Loan Fund program would be a meaningful first step in that effort. Under the previous iteration of this program, two Rural Industrial Park Loan Fund project were completed in the Buckeye Hills region, one in Washington County and one in Monroe County.

In short, we feel this program would be an important resource to help rural communities become increasingly competitive in the realm of site selection and outside business attraction.

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If there is other information or support we can lend to this effort on behalf of our members, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or any member of the Buckeye Hills staff.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Allphin". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Bret Allphin  
Development Director