



House Economic and Workforce Development Committee  
May 1, 2019  
House Bill 98  
Proponent Testimony (Written)

The Ohio Rural Development Alliance (“ORDA”) strongly supports House Bill 98 sponsored by Representatives Don Jones and Jack Cera to reinstate the Rural Industrial Park Loan Fund (the “Fund”). ORDA is an organization of Ohio’s Rural Transportation Planning Organizations and other interested parties dedicated to economic parity for Ohio’s rural communities. Our goals are focused on making sure Ohio is positioned to capitalize on opportunities in the regional economy as well as advocating for several other issues important to rural Ohio transportation, broadband access, and population health.

The Fund is a valuable tool for rural economic development by providing a mechanism that assists eligible applicants in financing the development and improvement of industrial parks. It accomplishes these goals by providing financial assistance in the form of loans and loan guarantees for loan acquisition; constructions, reconstructing, rehabilitating, remodeling, renovating, enlarging, or improving industrial park buildings; and infrastructure improvements. Without support from mechanisms like the Fund, these projects might not otherwise be able to secure financing. The improvements financed by the Fund allow for Ohio’s rural areas to compete for new businesses that provide jobs that are so vital to our rural communities.

The Fund, when operational, was responsible for significant development throughout rural Ohio. In fact, the Fund is one the only mechanisms for speculative development

throughout our rural communities – creating economic parity in the region. The Fund was responsible for The D.O. Hall Business Park in Cambridge, and the park is now nearly full. In Meigs County alone, the Fund was utilized three times – for the industrial park that is now paid in full, and twice to build speculative buildings that are also now paid in full. The park and buildings, combined, added approximately 100 jobs to the county. This innovative loan fund is critical for meaningful economic development in rural Ohio.

Thank you Chairman Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Sobecki, and members of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee for the opportunity of ORDA to weigh in on this important issue. We reiterate our support of House Bill 98 and thank you for your consideration of this worthy legislation. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have.