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Chairman Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Sobecki, and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 252, legislation that would promote economic development by providing additional support to land banks throughout Ohio.

For much of our history Ohio was a manufacturing powerhouse with industrial buildings all across Ohio. With recent job losses in the past decades, however, many of these sites have been left empty. Some examples include a 22-acre abandoned coke furnace along the Ohio River, covered with asbestos and right next to the water filtration plant that services much of Scioto County. There are abandoned hospitals, schools, and shopping centers all throughout Ohio.

The impact of these properties on the surrounding neighborhoods is unquestionably negative. Not only do these vacant and abandoned properties reduce property values, they make neighborhoods less safe. They are a nightmare for the cities and the towns and the villages that have to police them and keep the building secure. Recently, a child was killed by falling down an old elevator shaft in an abandoned Toledo factory. Also in Toledo, a murdered woman's body was left in an old industrial building of the north side of town. Policemen in Sandusky and

Cleveland have been killed within the past several years near these kinds of abandoned properties. And a recent study by Case Western Reserve University revealed that over 80% of all murders in Cleveland occur in and around vacant properties – and over 70% of the rapes occur in these buildings

Ohio began to address these blighted properties with the passage of Senate Bill 353 that established a network of county land banks throughout the state. Land banks provide counties with the ability to acquire foreclosed and vacant properties. There are 55 landbanks in Ohio today, with 3 in the process of forming. Federal and state dollars were allocated to the land banks in 2013 and 2014, however, many of these dollars were targeted mostly to residential properties and many abandoned buildings remain.

I introduced House Bill 252 to provided vital supports to land banks throughout Ohio to address these abandoned properties. House Bill 252 would create set aside fifty million dollars from GRF funds to fund the demolition of structures on blighted parcels. This program would be administered by the Development Services Agency. In my legislation, any county land bank that receives a grant from this program will also commit an amount that is equal or greater to the amount received.

Thank you Chairman Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Sobecki, and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank for your consideration and I am happy to answer any further questions at this time.