

CITY OF TOLEDO



DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OPERATIONS

House Economic & Workforce Development Committee
Proponent Testimony
House Bill 252
Chief George Kral, Toledo Police Department
June 19, 2019

Good afternoon Chairman Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, and Ranking Member Sobecki, my name is George Kral and I am the Chief of Police for the Toledo Police Department in Toledo, Ohio. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 252, legislation which would reduce crime in our communities and assist law enforcement officers in protecting our citizens.

Toledo, like many of Ohio's cities, has experience with vacant structures and properties. The properties make it difficult for neighborhoods to experience growth, while also posing a safety threat to the residents and their families. Blighted commercial properties are difficult to police because they serve as havens for crime. In fact, Toledo faced a tragedy in 2009, where a developmentally and physically disabled woman was brutally murdered and thoughtlessly discarded in an abandoned property on the north side of town. Not only did the property present an opportunistic location for a cold-blooded killer, it also delayed our law enforcement officers from providing closure to a grieving family.

Ohio began to recognize the need to help its communities address blighted properties with the passage of Senate Bill 353, which established a network of county land banks throughout the state. Land banks provide counties with the ability to acquire foreclosed and vacant properties. Many of the funds were dedicated to residential properties, and while it is important to address vacant and abandoned residential properties, there are additional blighted properties that require attention. Commercial properties, due to their size and prominence in our neighborhoods, reflect on the entire community thereby impacting the safety of our families.

I appreciate the efforts of the state to address blighted properties, but I cannot understate the importance of continuing these efforts in order to address additional vacant and forgotten locations that pose risks to our citizens' property values, health, and safety. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and I will be happy to address any questions from the committee.

Sincerely,
Chief George Kral
Toledo Police Department
George.Kral@toledo.oh.gov



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George Kral, Chief of Police
525 N. Erie Street, Toledo, Ohio 43604 U.S.A. Phone 419-245-3200 FAX: 419-936-3706
www.toledopolice.com

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