



**House Economic & Workforce Development Committee
Interested Party Testimony, House Bill 252 (Greenspan)
Jason Warner, Greater Ohio Policy Center
Wednesday, June 26, 2019**

Chair 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 provide funding to Ohio's land banks to assist with industrial and commercial demolition of blighted properties. My name is Jason Warner, Manager of Government Affairs at the Greater Ohio Policy Center.

Greater Ohio Policy Center is a statewide non-profit organization that champions revitalization and sustainable growth in Ohio's cities and metros. Greater Ohio is highly respected for its data-driven, nonpartisan policy analysis, research expertise, and policy development, and regularly provides expert analyses to public, private and nonprofit leaders at the local, state and national level. Our vision is a revitalized Ohio.

With that goal in mind, Greater Ohio was among the coalition of nonprofits and local and regional civic officials that successfully advocated for the creation of county land banks in 2010. That effort built upon and modified the existing Cuyahoga County land bank statute to authorize permissive creation of land banks in additional counties throughout the state. Today, almost two thirds of Ohio's counties have land banks. In the time since land banks were first established, land banks have done much to eradicate blight in communities across Ohio through the renovation or demolition of abandoned properties.

However, the majority of blight eradication efforts have focused on residential properties due to program restrictions, and/or funding availability and capacity at the local level. As a result, hundreds of abandoned commercial and industrial sites remain decaying across the state.

House Bill 252 represents an important tool to help rural, suburban and urban communities begin to address blight, which remains far too common a sight across Ohio. The introduction of House Bill 252 joins the conversation for blight eradication underway in the state – an issue that Greater Ohio has addressed with our policy focus on redeveloping brownfields throughout the state. Many of these former industrial and commercial sites House Bill 252 would target are brownfields, meaning they are unusable in their current condition due to environmental contamination. As conversations regarding House Bill 252 continue, it is important to discuss funding and regulatory guidance for the environmental remediation of these sites to eliminate contamination issues, so as to ensure these sites do not remain unusable and inhibit redevelopment opportunities.

We look forward to working with the sponsor and other interested parties in discussing ways to include funding and technical assistance to assist smaller places that may lack the resources or means to access funding for demolition and brownfield remediation of these commercial and industrial sites. It is vitally important that these issues be addressed in House Bill 252 if it is to have the impact we all desire for communities large and small throughout Ohio.

Greater Ohio sees tremendous opportunity in House Bill 252 as the bill advances through the legislative process. Commercial and industrial blight is a serious threat to many communities throughout Ohio, and thus our economy. We are pleased HB 252 is shining a light on this important issue.

Chair Zeltwanger and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding House Bill 252. I appreciate your time and attention today and would be happy to address any questions the committee may have.