



June 4, 2019

The Honorable Lou Terhar
Ohio Statehouse
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215
RE: SB 139 – Proponent Testimony

Good afternoon, Chairman Terhar, Vice Chair Roegner, and Ranking Member Williams:

My name is Greg Blatt and I am here today as an Ohio REALTOR® to testify in support of Senate Bill 139, the First Time Home Buyer Savings Act. I earned my real estate license in 1979 and became a licensed broker in 1988. As a forty-year veteran in the real estate brokerage business, I have had the opportunity to work with thousands first time homebuyers.

As a REALTOR®, I believe that owning a home is the cornerstone of the American Dream. Homeownership contributes to healthy, thriving communities and allows families to ensure generational wealth. Despite the occasional market downturn, it is one of the safest and most effective long-term investments a person can make. In fact, homeownership is THE foundation for a family's long-term wealth.

Despite this, millennial homeownership has been off to a slow start. Roughly 1 in 3 millennials under the age of 35 own a home as of the end of 2018, according to the US Census Bureau. That's 9% lower than previous generations' homeownership rates at ages 25 to 34, according to research from the Urban Institute's Housing Finance Policy Center.

A number of factors may be contributing to this – millennials delay marriage and starting families more than previous generations and are more transient than previous generations. But, according to Federal Reserve research released in 2019, student loan debt also contributes to a reluctance in homeownership in young adults.

My son is a classic example of trying to save for a down payment with after tax dollars. Once taxes are taken from earnings coupled with other required debt payments for student loans and other living expenses, there is little to no money left for saving for a down payment. With a First Time Home Buyer Savings Account, family members would be able to contribute to the fund, helping to raise the down payment required much faster. With the median age of first-time home buyers shifting from the mid 20's to 32 years old, the Savings plan would help to put first-time home buyers in the market more quickly. This would have a...trickle up effect... for move up buyers, freeing them to move to their second home once the first-time home sells.

Anjanette Frye, President • **Scott R. Williams**, CEO



As Ohio competes with other states in wanting to curb the “brain drain” of our young people, homeownership plays a huge role in affording them an opportunity to set down roots in Ohio and raise their own families here. First Time Home Buyer Savings Accounts would be an effective tool in this fight.

Thank you and I am happy to take any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greg".

Greg Blatt