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Senate Bill 235 Interested Party Testimony
Johnna Reeder, President & CEO, REDI Cincinnati
Senate Ways and Means Committee - April 5, 2016

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Beagle, Minority Leader Tavares and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Johnna Reeder, and I am the president and CEO of the Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Cincinnati, and a member of the JobsOhio network. Today, my goal is to share an economic developer's perspective on site readiness in the State of Ohio. While I work in the Greater Cincinnati area, I am keenly aware that all of Ohio needs more "shovel -ready" sites.

The more shovel-ready sites in the state, the more likely Ohio will be seen as a place ready to locate new businesses and support growing businesses – a goal that is core to REDI Cincinnati's mission. A "shovel-ready" site is one that is prepared for a developer to build on immediately. Readying a site could include such tasks as leveling the topography, completing environmental tests and remediation, adding curbs and gutters, installing utilities and rezoning from agriculture to commercial or industrial.

Competition for retaining and attracting businesses is fierce. As economic developers, we need to utilize all our tools to compete with other states.

Years ago, company owners were willing to wait two or more years for due diligence and site development before locating a business. Today, these business leaders want certainty and speed to market requiring a new location to be operational in under one year of making a site decision. Time is money to these companies and we must get ahead of their needs and requirements.

Shovel-ready sites make Ohio more attractive to site selection consultants and the businesses they are helping to relocate because they allow end-user companies to more easily see the site's potential, move quickly towards operational and alleviate costs they would otherwise have to pay to ready a site.

These ready sites empower economic developers – from JobsOhio, to the regional partners like REDI Cincinnati, to the local economic developers in communities across the state – to attract and retain expanding businesses that will help their communities grow.

Thank you to the bill sponsors, Senators Beagle and Coley for their work on this legislation; and thank you for your consideration today.

Johnna Reeder
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