**Written Testimony to the Senate Finance Committee**

**House Bill 166**

**May 21, 2019**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and honorable members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in favor of increasing the Ohio Housing Trust Fund in Am. Sub. HB 166. The ten (10) member organizations NeighborWorks Collaborative of Ohio (NCO) are non-profit affordable housing developers and community organizations providing rental housing, home ownership opportunities and related services such as financial coaching, home buyer education and linkages to other social programs and workforce training. Each member organization is affiliated with NeighborWorks America, which is a Congressionally-chartered, national non-profit organization that creates opportunities for people to live in affordable homes, improve their lives and strengthen their communities. NCO is a founding member of the Home Matters to Ohio coalition.

The Ohio Housing Trust Fund is the state’s only vehicle for investment in affordable housing. NCO member organizations utilize Housing Trust Fund dollars primarily in two ways:

1. As gap funding on complex Low Income Housing Tax Credit projects; and
2. For emergency Home Repair Programs in targeted communities.

As you all are probably well aware, for Ohio’s working families, the gap between wages and rising rents has grown steadily over the last 5 years, with only 2 of the 10 most common jobs in Ohio actually paying employees enough to afford a basic two-bedroom apartment. Already in low supply, Ohio’s affordable housing stock is over-subscribed in many communities across the state, creating a crisis for families and their children. With safe, decent and affordable housing being a basic need, providing more resources to increase the number of affordable units statewide has a positive effect not only on the families themselves, but also on taxpayers in Ohio. Housing insecurity is a key social determinant of health and addressing this issue as a state will improve health outcomes for Ohio’s children, families and seniors, while reducing costs in the education, foster care, and criminal justice systems. More Housing Trust Fund dollars would enable more projects to be financed by the private sector and increase the supply of affordable housing for our working families.

Organizations are also putting Housing Trust Fund dollars to work through home repair programs. These programs, largely targeted toward vulnerable seniors, help lower income seniors fix issues with their homes, like a leaky roof, furnace repair or making their home wheel-chair accessible. This enables seniors to age-in-place longer and avoid living in a costly nursing home, often funded through government dollars.

The demand for home repair dollars is high across the state, with allocations often running out of funding quickly in the communities they serve.

As you all are well-aware, the Ohio Housing Trust Fund has not had a funding increase since 2003, and its funding has been on the decline for the last several biennium. Because of this, when accounting for inflation, the OHTF’s purchase power has decreased 40% compared to 2003, when the current funding mechanism was created.

Ohio’s need for affordable housing has increased significantly since the inception of the OHTF in 2003 and could be reaching a crisis point in the near future. Supporting a modest increase in the Housing Trust Fund will allow the state to provide more safe, decent, affordable housing and related programs for Ohio’s working families and most vulnerable. I urge members of the Senate Finance Committee to support amendment SC 2974 to increase funding for the Fund. If Members of the Committee have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach out to me directly.

Respectfully submitted,



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**Member Organizations**:

1. [East Akron Neighborhood Development Corporation](http://eandc.org/)
   * Serving Summit and Stark Counities
2. [Famicos Foundation](http://www.famicos.org/)
   * Serving Cuyahoga County
3. [Home Ownership Center of Greater Cincinnati](http://www.hometoday.cc/index.html)
   * Serving Hamilton County
4. Homeport
   * Serving Central Ohio
5. [Neighborhood Development Services](http://www.ndsohio.org/)
   * Serving Northeastern, Eastern and Southeastern Ohio
6. [Neighborhood Housing Partnership of Greater Springfield](http://www.springfieldnhp.org/)
   * Serving Clark County
7. [Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Cleveland](http://www.nhscleveland.org/)
   * Serving Cuyahoga County
8. [Neighborhood Housing Services of Hamilton](http://www.butlercounty-nhs.org/)
   * Serving Southwestern Ohio
9. [NeighborWorks® Toledo Region](http://www.nhstoledo.org/)

* Serving Northwestern Ohio

1. [St. Mary Development Corporation](http://www.stmarydevelopment.org/)
   * Serving Western, Northwestern and Southwestern Ohio