**Ohio Senate Finance Committee**

**House Bill 166 Interested Party Testimony**

**Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority**

**Charles Hillman, President & CEO**

**May 23, 2019**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 166. My name is Charles Hillman and I serve as President & CEO of the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority. My organization helps residents of Franklin County access affordable housing through collaborative partnerships to develop, renovate, and maintain housing; promote neighborhood revitalization; and assist residents in accessing needed social services.

Housing is by far the most expensive item in the family budget and an affordable home is simply out of reach for too many Ohioans. Most states have housing trust fund programs to make housing more affordable for their residents, but the Ohio Housing Trust Fund (OHTF) has one of the best track records in the U.S. Over the past 27 years, it has helped nearly one million Ohioans with a wide range of needs. Unfortunately, there has not been an increase in the OHTF since 2003 when the Housing Trust Fund fee was created and started to be collected by county recorders. The OHTF’s purchasing power has decreased 40% since its inception. During this same period, Ohio’s homelessness and affordable housing needs have increased.

Just in the past five years, total homelessness in Ohio increased by 20% to over 70,000 people. The number of homeless children during this period has increased 25% to nearly 21,000 people. Most distressing, the number of homeless infants in Ohio increased by 53% in the past five years to nearly 3,000. My organization has been working to help combat this trend every day, and I know even more can be done. This work is critical because housing insecurity is a key social determinant in health and education outcomes, in addition to the level of strain it places on our social service and criminal justice systems.

* Now is the time to build on the success of the OHTF by expanding its reach to more Ohioans. I would encourage this committee to accept an amendment to HB 166 that would do just that.
* First, the amendment would remove the $50 million cap on the amount of Housing Trust Fund fees collected by county recorders that are deposited into the Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Trust Fund. Essentially, this amendment would enable all OHTF fees to be deposited into the fund because the amendment would also eliminate the Housing Trust Reserve Fund into which trust fund fees collected in excess of $50 million are currently deposited.
* Second, the amendment would include a $2.00 fee increase for the first page of an instrument at the county recorder’s office and retains the base fee for subsequent pages of $4.00 per page. Because the county recorder collects an equal amount for the OHTF, one instrument will cost $32 for the first page instead of $28 for the first two pages, plus $8.00 for each subsequent page.

These proposed changes would make a big difference for Ohioans in need without costing the state any General Revenue Fund dollars. I hope you will consider including this amendment in the Senate version of the operating budget bill.

Thank you, again for affording me the opportunity to provide this testimony. I appreciate your partnership in helping improve the lives of Ohio’s most vulnerable citizens by strengthening this critical program.