



House Finance Committee

Testimony Submitted as Written

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House Bill 237 – Interested Party

Chairman Oelslager and Members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share testimony on the impact of the county recorders' fee on the generation of housing development and economic activity across Ohio.

Finance Fund is a mission-guided, non-profit organization that drives capital, real estate development services, and other resources to low- and moderate-income communities to improve quality of life across Ohio. We were founded in 1987 and I have been the President and CEO since 2016.

I am testifying today as an interested party on House Bill 237. However, if HB 237 is amended to restore the historic 50/50 revenue split between counties and the OHTF, Finance Fund would become a proponent.

The Ohio Housing Trust Fund (OHTF) is the state's primary funding source for homelessness and affordable housing services. While other partners such as the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio can share their experience directing these funds to homeless services, Finance Fund's work through OHTF dollars most closely touches housing and economic development.

As directed in ORC 174.02, Finance Fund administers no more than 5% of the fund in support of housing and economic development projects across the entire state. These grant funds enable local nonprofit organizations with a neighborhood focus to meet the financial needs of projects that generate housing affordable to the community and bring needed goods and services to the community which in turn generates jobs. The grants also help leverage additional dollars to these projects as multiple sources are needed to bring these projects to life in low to moderate income communities.

The Pre-development grants are available for housing projects and are one of the only sources of funding available that allows clients to use the funds to cover soft costs such as project development and planning, architectural and site plans, legal research, engineering drawings, tax syndication, market and feasibility studies, zoning navigation, environmental review and more. Economic Development grants support projects uses such as land acquisition, machinery, equipment, furniture and fixtures, and other hard costs related to bricks and mortar construction.



In the interest of time, I will give just two brief examples of current grant recipients. In 2021, Finance Fund awarded an Economic Development Grant to Muskingum Behavioral Health to develop a 34 unit residence for individuals and families in substance abuse and mental health recovery. The resulting project, Pearl House, just welcomed their first residents this fall and case workers are helping formerly homeless individuals stay sober and stabilize their lives so they can pursue employment and learn necessary life skills. In 2022, Finance Fund awarded a Pre-development Grant to Citywide in Dayton to explore a partnership with Dayton Children's Hospital that will develop a kinship care housing community for their clients.

Though the portion of OHTF dollars administered by Finance Fund may seem small, it is extremely impactful. We appreciate that half of county recordation fee revenue has traditionally been disbursed to the county recorders and realized meaningful local impact, with the other half directed to OHTF. We respectfully request that you maintain the historic precedent of committing half these dollars to housing and housing-related services. Now more than ever, as not just in Central Ohio but across much of the state, we are seeing a gap in units that are affordable and available to their local residents. We should maintain, if not strengthen, the proven tools at our fingertips for generating much-needed units and housing-related services. The OHTF is one such tool, with a lengthy and impactful track record. Across programming, OHTF generates over \$8 for every dollar allocated and creates construction, housing service provider, and other jobs in communities that need them.

Thank you for your consideration of restoring the 50/50 split. Please contact me any time at 614-221-1114 or dturoff@financefund.org with questions.

