



Nov. 29, 2022

Ways and Means Committee
The Ohio House of Representatives
Columbus, Ohio

Re: Substitute Senate Bill No. 112

Dear Chair Merrin, Vice Chair Riedel, and Ranking Member Sobecki,

On behalf of the Mahoning County Land Bank (MCLB), established in the county seat of Youngstown, I seek your support of Substitute Senate Bill No. 112.

When the Ohio Legislature authorized Cuyahoga County to operate the first county land bank in late 2008, it planned to review the pilot project after 2 years and then discuss an expansion. Mahoning County could not afford to wait. With one in five Youngstown houses being statistically empty, the city had one of the largest inventories of vacant and abandoned properties per capita in the U.S. Neighboring communities also experienced the costs and dangers of abandonment.

Mahoning County and its peers advocated for expansion in 2009, and cheered when enabling legislation was approved by both chambers of the General Assembly on the same day in 2010.

Since then, the breadth of the county land bank's work has encompassed nearly every taxing district here. Some examples:

- Thanks to a collaboration between Youngstown and MCLB, the city's backlog of unsafe, beyond-repair housing has shrunk from a high of 4,500 a decade ago to about 700 today.
- The municipalities of Campbell, Struthers and Sebring – which, like Youngstown, experienced property abandonment after the rise and fall of local industry – also sought MCLB's assistance with demolition.
- Inner-ring suburbs including Austintown and Boardman have partnered with MCLB on housing demolition and renovation projects.
- MCLB is equally engaged in building up communities through commercial property revitalization, land assembly for economic development, and greening programs on vacant land to improve public health.

Ohio's leaders equipped county land banks with essential tools from the beginning. Please update our tool box by supporting Substitute Senate Bill 112 in committee and the current General Assembly.

Thank you for your leadership and service to Ohio.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debora Flora".

Debora Flora
Executive Director