



**Senate Finance Committee
Interested Party Testimony, House Bill 110 (Oelslager)
Jason Warner, Greater Ohio Policy Center
Tuesday, May 18, 2021**

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee: thank you for providing me with this opportunity to provide interested party testimony on House Bill 110, the main operating budget for FY2022-2023.

My name is Jason Warner, and I am the Director of Strategic Engagement with the Greater Policy Center (GOPC). GOPC is a statewide non-profit organization that champions revitalization and sustainable growth in Ohio's cities and metros. GOPC is highly respected for its data-driven, nonpartisan policy analysis, research, and policy development, and regularly provides expert analyses to public, private and nonprofit leaders at the local, state and national level.

While Greater Ohio recognizes the budget bill thoughtfully considers many of Ohio's most pressing needs, **my testimony to you today addresses one policy priority: brownfields funding**. Brownfields are former industrial and commercial sites are unusable for new development in their current condition, and they are found in every county of the state. These blighted properties discourage investment and create barriers to job creation.

Ohio was once a national leader in brownfield redevelopment through the Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund (CORF). CORF, which was approved by Ohio voters in 2000 and renewed in 2008, provided \$400 million through liquor-based bonded funds to communities across Ohio to revitalize brownfield sites. The creation of JobsOhio transferred Ohio's state-owned liquor agency to the private economic development agency, and with it, the bulk of Ohio's brownfield funding.

GOPC is supportive of an amendment, **SC2343**, that has been submitted for consideration in the budget. **This amendment would dedicate the excess liquor profits returned to the state from JobsOhio as the source of funding for CORF**. This amendment is similar to Senate Bill 84, which is currently under consideration in the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

As the original CORF program was funded by the state liquor sales, GOPC recommends the legislature allocate the returned liquor profits to fund the CORF program. By providing a dedicated, sustained funding source to CORF, Ohio's communities will have access to transformative dollars – aimed at revitalizing blight to spark investments in downtowns, housing, and new business. It is likely that business re-shoring will occur due to the pandemic, and CORF would provide another funding source to help Ohio remain competitive in attracting and retaining businesses.

The average cost of remediating one brownfield acre can be between \$15,000 and \$35,000. However, GOPC research finds that for every one dollar invested by the state, CORF generated an additional \$4.67 in new economic activity. In cleanup alone, CORF contributed \$1.4 billion annually to Ohio's GDP during its peak tenure. Additionally, new construction and ongoing tax

revenues from the new businesses or homes on the remediated site contribute to the state's economy.

One additional change under this proposal is worth noting: the list of entities eligible to be a recipient of CORF funds would be expanded to include county land reutilization corporations, or land banks. Land banks have increasingly begun to take on the responsibility of addressing vacant and abandoned commercial and industrial sites, in addition to homes, and Greater Ohio believes that it makes sense to expand the scope of the bill to ensure that these sites, which may include brownfields, are able to be addressed in the proper manner.

In conclusion, Chair Dolan we wish to thank you and the members of the committee for your time and attention today as we have outlined a policy priority that can enhance economic opportunity for the state and assist Ohio's communities in returning blighted properties to productive use. **We ask for the favorable adoption of SC2343 as a part of House Bill 110.**

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.