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HAMILTON COUNTY TREASURER

Ohio House Civil Justice Committee
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Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, my name is Jill Schiller, and I am the Hamilton County Treasurer. Thank you for allowing me to speak today in my role as Hamilton County Treasurer, and on behalf of the County Treasurers Association of Ohio, against the inclusion of amendment AM1842 to HB 390, which is essentially HB153, that is pending in the House State & Local Government Committee.

To be clear, the County Treasurers Association of Ohio holds no position on HB390. But we are strongly opposed to the language in AM1842. Landbanks have served a great purpose since they began in Ohio in the 2010s. They have enabled neighborhood transformation through reduced or eliminated blight, reduced crime rates relating to abandoned buildings, and increased the availability of affordable housing - one of the greatest areas of need across the state.

The language in AM1842 seeks to specify which abandoned land is subject to expedited foreclosure. It is being pushed by an out of state legal organization related to a Minnesota case heard by the U.S. Supreme Court, *Tyler v. Hennepin*. Ohio law is already far stricter than Minnesota, and the facts in *Tyler* could not have occurred here. Our foreclosure laws are far stricter and better protect property owners. We already allow for owners to procure the excess proceeds from tax foreclosure sales.

HB153 would change Ohio law for the worse and allow for the protection of slumlords, absentee and/or out of state owners who have abandoned their properties, allowing them to fall into states of terrible disrepair and leaving their tax obligations unpaid. This leaves the ill effects to fall on the neighbors, and the responsibility of addressing the property on already-stretched local government and other taxpayers. It is unfair and unjust.

We as County Treasurers respect and support the rights of property owners; indeed, it is the purpose of our office to work to support these rights. The proposed actions of this bill are not in the best interest of our communities. The fact is that these are abandoned, vacant, unoccupied, tax delinquent properties; the owner has ignored the tax bills, and notices to pay, the owner has not gone on a payment plan, the owner gets served with the foreclosure notice yet ignores the summons and complaint, fails to attend the hearing after being given notice, fails to redeem the property even after the decree, and fails to appeal any allegation of lost surplus. This cyclical mess leaves responsible taxpayers footing the bill and paying the price.

We firmly believe Ohio law as it exists today offers more than adequate protections for property owners. We stand alongside the County Commissioners Association of Ohio in our opposition to AM1842 being included in HB 390.

Thank you for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.