

**Ohio's 94<sup>th</sup> District**

Athens County  
Meigs County  
Morgan County  
Washington County (part)



**Committees**

Rules and Reference  
Finance

**Jay Edwards  
Ohio House Finance Chair**

**HB 478 Sponsor Testimony: House Criminal Justice Committee**

Chair Abrams, Vice-Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee.

Thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 478. Briefly, this bill permits property owners to request an immediate removal of a person unlawfully occupying a residential property, expands the definition of criminal mischief to include unlawfully detaining, occupying, or trespassing upon a residential dwelling and intentionally causing damage to the dwelling and created a criminal offense specific to title fraud.

What we are looking to do, is provide remedies and protections for property owners throughout the State of Ohio who have already or will potentially deal with squatters. We are also looking to close loopholes in Ohio law that are currently being taken advantage of by squatters throughout the state.

For example, there was an incident that was reported last week in Delaware Ohio where squatters moved into an abandoned home, created a trash-strewn mess on the outside of the house and even ignited a fire. The neighbors around the area claimed that there were 20 people living at the house at one point joining the original squatters.

Thankfully, this is just one example of an isolated incident and not a widespread issue throughout the State of Ohio. However, this bill is a preventative measure to make sure that this does not become a major issue in the future. We need to send a message that squatting will never be tolerated in this state and property owners have the right to defend and protect their property.

Thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 478. I will now turn to my joint sponsor Representative LaRe who will provide a few words.