

**Testimony In Opposition to House Bills 478 and 480**  
**House Criminal Justice Committee**  
**Ohio House of Representatives**  
**June 11, 2024**

Chairwoman Abrams and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on House Bills 478 and 480 which proposes to address unauthorized occupants of homes.

For the reasons outlined below, I urge the committee to table action on these proposed bills until the extent and nature of the problem can be assessed and the potential adverse consequences of these bills can be addressed.

1. To my knowledge no data has been assembled, other than isolated anecdotal stories, that would validate the claims that “a wave of squatting cases continue to terrify homeowners across the country” [Fox News, April 24, 2024]. Yet these bills are presented as urgently needed to stem an epidemic. The Akron Cleveland Association of Realtors (ACAR) was recently asked if they had data on the extent of squatting; they had none. At minimum, action on these bills should be tabled until the extent and nature of the problem can be ascertained.
2. The proposed bills would undo decades of established law that requires a property owner to file an eviction in court before evicting an occupant that has no color of title, or has allegedly lost their right to occupy a property. The bills would allow an owner to simply submit an affidavit to a local Sheriff and would empower the Sheriff to remove an occupant, without the facts of the matter being reviewed by a neutral trier of fact. This has potential for abuse with unscrupulous landlords, who may want to avoid the expense of an eviction in court, simply submitting an affidavit. While the bills propose that aggrieved parties can file a lawsuit after the fact, the reality is that most tenants don't have access to legal resources and may be in no position to defend themselves once they have been made homeless.
3. Meanwhile, there is evidence to suggest that many cities do have a serious problem with squatters occupying *abandoned* homes, engaged in drug and other illegal activity, but in these cases there is no owner who can be found. Since the proposed bills are based on the premise that there is an owner who will come forward with an affidavit, these bills would do nothing to address this serious problem.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge you to table these bills until research can be done to determine the extent of the problem, and determine whether a related and more serious problem would go unaddressed.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bills 478 and 480. Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

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