

**Economic and Workforce
Development Committee
House Bill 3 (Proponent Testimony)
Amy Albery – Wallick Communities
March 14, 2023**

Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch, and members of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee, I am Amy Albery, CEO of Wallick Communities. Wallick is a privately-owned, Ohio-based company that develops, constructs, and manages affordable housing communities as well as independent living, assisted living, and memory care communities.

Wallick brings safe, affordable housing solutions to the market that strengthen communities, connect people to resources, and open doors to opportunities. Built upon five decades of industry knowledge and experience, Wallick helps low-income families and seniors by working to solve the major crisis threatening the United States' supply of decent, affordable housing. In addition to nine senior living communities in Ohio, Wallick owns or manages 200+ affordable communities in nine states across the Midwest and employs over 1,100 associates. As a for-profit organization with a nonprofit mindset, Wallick has been ranked first in the nation for affordable housing preservation.

On behalf of Wallick Communities and the Ohio Housing Council, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 3. I am here today to share our experiences as an owner, developer, builder, and property manager of affordable housing – and what the passing of House Bill 3 would mean for Wallick and the Ohioans it houses.

It's without a doubt that Central Ohio is flourishing. The State's economy is strong, the population is booming, and companies are expanding. Additionally, the Intel project has brought a second wave of possibilities for Ohio, making us the envy of communities across the nation. However, it all comes at a cost – and that cost is families living out of their cars, college graduates returning to their parent's homes, and adults with 3-4 roommates living in one apartment. All of this is because Ohio does not have enough affordable housing.

To further visualize who these people are to you, it's your child's kindergarten teacher, the maintenance technician at your apartment complex, and the police officer that protects your neighborhood. These working individuals who build and strengthen communities through their roles cannot afford housing.

Dozens of deals from several developers are unable to move forward due to lack of resources. For Wallick, our recently submitted 50 unit 4% bond gap project in Marion was not funded because we hit the limit on awards from OHFA, but there are many other deals just like that in towns like Marion that could otherwise go forward with a state credit.

We have seen first-hand that Ohio's housing crisis has gone beyond its metropolitan areas and is now present in non-urban communities. A large percentage of Wallick Communities properties are in rural areas. One of our more recent affordable developments in Hillsboro, Ohio (population 6,605) is in the midst of lease-up and has an extensive waitlist, which far exceeds the 56 homes we have available.

Some background on myself, I grew up on a 150-year-old dairy farm in Alexandria, a rural town in Licking County – an area that's become the epicenter of the Intel development. My mom and sister still live on the farm, now leased out to crop farmers. Given my position as CEO of an affordable housing developer and my status as a Licking County resident, I have unique insight into that area's dilemma. With thousands of Intel workers and countless other suppliers bringing employees to Licking County, the growing population and lack of housing is a concern for everyone.

You ask what Wallick Communities would do if House Bill 3 is passed. My answer is simple – we would use the resources to create more affordable workforce housing for the family that's living in their car, for the 25-year-old who's been ready to leave the nest, and for the couple who wants to raise their children in the small town where they grew up. Again, these are working individuals who have jobs and pay their bills. They struggle because housing costs have soared beyond their income.

Therefore, Chair and members of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee, I implore you to consider the passing of HB 3. Thank you for hearing me today. I welcome all questions.