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Sponsor Testimony
Senate Bill 226

Ohio House Economic and Workforce Development Committee
November 19th, 2024

Chair Lorenz, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch, and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 226.

This legislation is based on an amendment to the operating budget that I crafted which was passed by the legislature, but partially vetoed by the governor. The part of the amendment that is now law prohibits foreign adversaries of the United States from purchasing farmland in Ohio. However, the vetoed portion would have included land within 25 miles of a military installation as part of the land purchasing prohibition.

This updated language, which is virtually identical to an upcoming version of House Bill 212, expands prohibitions on land purchasing to include land within 25 miles of a military installation or critical infrastructure; that is, electric substations, water treatment facilities, natural gas pipelines, dams, telecommunications or broadband infrastructure, railroads, and more.

Furthermore, since we know that adversaries of the United States will take advantage of every loophole to undermine our nation's interests, this bill also expands prohibited parties to include not just foreign adversaries and their governments, but also businesses headquartered in and citizens of those countries.

Under current law, as passed in last year's operating budget, the Secretary of State is required to report potential violations of land purchasing restrictions to the Ohio Attorney General. This bill modifies that provision

by moving the reporting process to county auditors, who have authority over the conveyance of property. County auditors must require an affirmation from both the potential buyer and seller of land whether they are subject to the land purchasing restrictions laid out in this section. If the auditor suspects that either the buyer or seller of land is restricted from owning that land, he or she must refer the case to the county sheriff for investigation. The sheriff, upon finding that a violation has occurred, must refer the violation to the county prosecutor for legal action.

I introduced this bill because I strongly believe that Ohio's land should not be for sale to those who seek to destroy the American way of life. The People's Republic of China – Communist China – has not hidden the fact that their goal is not just to outcompete and outperform the United States; it is to eventually rule the world.

As of last summer, Chinese firms and investors owned 380,000 acres of land in the United States, and they will not stop there. Fufeng USA, a Chinese manufacturer, recently attempted to purchase land and build a facility 20 minutes from Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota. When the Grand Forks City Council cancelled the project – due to security concerns – Fufeng turned its attention to Ohio, where as of last year, they were seeking land for development.

This cannot be allowed to continue. Should enemies of our country be permitted to purchase land next to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, for example? Our land is currently up for grabs by those who want to cause us harm, endangering our national secrets. China is the most clear and present danger at this moment in time, but this legislation would protect against these threats from any adversarial nation (Iran, North Korea, Russia, and so on) along with terrorist groups, cartels, and more.

Thank you again for your time and attention. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.