



March 28, 2023

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for allowing the Jefferson County Port Authority to submit interested party testimony on House Bill 33.

**Re: Interested Party Testimony on Ohio House Bill 33**

The Jefferson County Port Authority, a Political Subdivision formed pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4582 (the "Port Authority"), submits this interested party testimony on Ohio House Bill 33. The Port Authority is the comprehensive economic development agency for Jefferson County, Ohio. As you are aware, the as-introduced budget does not include funding for the Brownfield Remediation Program or the Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Program. The Port Authority submits this testimony to encourage the committee to provide an additional \$350 million and \$150 million respectively to these programs in the FY24-25 budget.

Recognizing the challenges of addressing brownfield sites and the need to have sites ready for redevelopment throughout the State, the FY22-23 main operating budget established the Brownfield Remediation Fund (BRF) and the Building Demolition and Site Revitalization (BDSR), providing \$350 million to assess and cleanup environmentally contaminated sites and \$150 million to address commercial and residential demolition. We applaud the Legislature for these programs, and the Ohio Department of Development in its administration of these successful programs. It has presented opportunities in nearly every county in the State. The Brownfield Remediation Fund's \$350 million provided grants to 313 projects in 83 of Ohio's 88 counties. The Demolition Fund's \$150 million will support 3,699 projects in 87 of Ohio's 88 counties. While this is a significant investment, the need remains for grant dollars to remediate and redevelop these blighted brownfields into productive use.

The initial investment of \$350 million granted 188 brownfield cleanup grants, which is the final step in the remediation process to address environmental contamination and allow these brownfields to become new industrial and commercial sites, new housing or shovel-ready land. In addition, 125 projects were granted assessment dollars. Assessment work is an important step in the remedial process, but it is only the first step to determine the contamination present on the site and the remedial action required to address such contamination. Without additional funding, these 125 projects will likely remain contaminated, and unable to move to a shovel-ready state.

The Port Authority was the grateful recipient of six Brownfield Remediation Program grants for a total of \$1,250,000. These grants are currently being utilized to complete environmental assessments crucial for determining if remediation is necessary as the first steps in the revitalization of Jefferson County. The economy of Jefferson County remains distressed due to

the decline of the steel and coal industries towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Due to the distressed economic condition of Jefferson County, many more brownfield properties remain unassessed and pose a continued hazard to the health and wellbeing of the population. As such, additional funding would be beneficial to the continued economic revitalization of the region. It is anticipated that remediation will be needed at several of the properties currently under assessment using program dollars. Without this necessary additional funding, complete remediation of these properties will likely not be possible.

Equally as important, the Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Program's \$150 million investment has allowed for communities to address decades long blight remediation needs. This program has been the first meaningful investment into commercial demolition and this is evident by the 87 counties awarded these funds. This program allowed for an obvious impact in Ohio's communities, but more investment is needed to continue to create opportunities for future development. Many distressed and dilapidated properties remain throughout the aging communities and buildings in Jefferson County with no current funding source for demolition. Focused efforts and collaboration between the Jefferson County Land Bank, the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners, the City of Steubenville, and the Port Authority permitted our area to address dilapidated buildings in the City of Steubenville and throughout the Jefferson County.

A \$500 million investment in the brownfield and demolition grant programs will have a positive impact throughout the state, and the communities that are utilizing these funds. Past research by the Greater Ohio Policy Center shows that for every dollar the state invests, there is a five dollar return in private investment. Ohio's previous brownfield grant program contributed more than one billion dollars to the state's GDP during its tenure.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact me by telephone me at (740) 283-2476 or by e-mail at [rnaylor@jcport.com](mailto:rnaylor@jcport.com).

Very truly yours,



Robert Naylor, Executive Director  
Jefferson County Port Authority

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