

House Finance Committee on Agriculture, Development, and
Natural Resources

Testimony – Prepared by Tom Mignery – Burgess & Niple, Inc.

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Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, and Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee on Agriculture, Development, and Natural Resources, thank you for the opportunity to provide Testimony regarding the Ohio's Operating Budget for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025 on Brownfield funding.

My name is Tom Mignery, and I am in charge of Burgess & Niple's Brownfield Program. I am a Senior Hydrogeologist and a Certified Professional under Ohio EPA's Voluntary Action Program (VAP). I have personally signed 33 VAP No Further Action letters for Ohio brownfield redevelopment sites. I have worked for B&N for 36 years on Brownfield redevelopment where we provide economic development value to public and private clients.

Brownfield Successes Over Past Two Years

The FY22-23 main operating budget established the Brownfield Remediation Fund (BRF), providing \$350 million to assess and cleanup these environmentally contaminated sites. We commend the Legislature for the inclusion of the previous Brownfield program into the FY22-23, and the Ohio Department of Development in its administration of this

successful program. So, there may be questions on the impact of the previous ODOD \$350M and whether or not to provide additional allocation to address additional brownfield challenges by the presence of brownfields.

I have travelled over 1,000,000 miles in my 36-year career across Ohio and visited all 88 Counties and most of the large, and mid-size cities, villages, and hamlets in Ohio. All I can tell you is that there remains a large number of brownfields, and while the previous allocation was a significant investment in the assessment and cleanup of brownfields, the need remains, for grant dollars to assess, remediate and redevelop these blighted brownfields into productive use.

Addressing the Ongoing Need for Revitalization

I have personally visited many of these remaining industrial sites, service stations, schools and abandoned sites. Moreover, I am speaking for the Large Cities such as the 3 C's and Dayton, mid-size cities such as Middletown, Villages such as Crooksville, and smaller hamlets located throughout Morrow County. Obviously, the as-introduced budget does not include funding for the Brownfield Remediation Fund. And therefore, **we are here today to encourage the committee to provide an additional \$500 million to this program in the FY24-25 budget.**

Although you are likely aware of the positive economic impacts from other testimonials, I want to share with you the impact on the local neighborhoods. Now I've heard from Mayors, City Managers, Village Administrators of the aesthetic or visual

impacts that a demolition and cleanup of a brownfield can have on the neighborhood “Verve”. I can tell you, after talking with many neighborhood folks and government leaders, is that One common theme of the ODOD Brownfield program is that **the City/Village, land banks, Counties and the State of Ohio give a damn!** There is a palpable sense of a neighborhood pride and that government works for the people, and the impact that the Mayor or leader of a public entity has on listening to the citizens is huge! **But the big bonus that I have been a part of is a reduction of risk exposure to potential toxins to protect local neighborhoods adjacent to brownfields. Many of these are known as environmental justice areas, where many times, the residents have been dealt a tough poker hand that is difficult to overcome suppressed property values, higher incidences of cancer, and just overcoming the stigma of residing next to a Brownfield. I have witnessed this in Akron (for the original Harvey Firestone manufacturing site), in Sidney (Wagner Ware brownfield), in Troy (numerous former service stations), in Middletown (Middletown Paperboard Site), and other sites in Clinton, Guernsey and Crawford Counties and many other sites across Ohio.**

There remain additional brownfields to sustain an additional investment of \$500 million, which previously granted 188 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, mixed-use space, or developable land.

An additional investment of \$500 million to this program will allow projects that received an assessment to apply for cleanup funds. In addition to these 125 assessment projects, many more brownfield sites face the need for brownfield grant Assessment and Clean up dollars. Case in point - When the final round for ODOD Brownfield applications opened, ODOD had to close in less than 3 business days due to limited funds and an overwhelming amount of applications.

I am here as well today to encourage members of the House Finance Committee to include additional funding for Brownfield AND to Re-up the \$20M Abandoned Gas Station Program in the next budget. **What we do with the approved budget amendment matters to those Mr. and Mrs. Magillicutty's who live next door to a brownfield!!!**

Conclusion

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

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