



**House State and Local Government Committee
Proponent Testimony – HB 153
6/20/2023**

Chair John, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 153 (HB 153) on behalf of Ohio REALTORS®.

Formed in 1910, Ohio REALTORS® is the state's largest professional trade organization with more than 36,000 members representing both residential and commercial practitioners, as well as auctioneers and appraisers. We also represent homeowners, homebuyers, and support policies to protect private property rights.

HB 153 is designed to protect a homeowner's equity in a property. Typically, a tax-delinquent property is sold to the highest bidder, the debts are paid, and the previous property owner collects the remaining proceeds. However, as you heard during sponsor testimony, certain states permit local governments to recover more than what is owed in delinquent taxes when a property goes into tax foreclosure. In these states, local governments are not only able to retrieve what is owed in delinquent taxes, but they also collect the amount a property sells for at a tax foreclosure sale, leaving the homeowner with nothing, regardless of how much equity he or she had in the property.

While Ohio's tax foreclosure laws normally protect against this practice, a loophole exists, which grants local governments the ability to transfer an abandoned tax delinquent property to another political subdivision like a land bank without being offered at a public sale. HB 153 would protect homeowners against this practice by only allowing tax-foreclosed properties to be transferred to another political subdivision if the delinquent taxes exceed the property's fair market value. Should the property's fair market value be greater than the amount of delinquent taxes then HB 153 would require that the property be offered at public sale.

We applaud Rep. Hillyer for his work to protect a property owner's equity in a property by closing this loophole within Ohio's law. We urge the committee's support.

Sincerely,

Scott Williams
Chief Executive Officer
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