



December 5, 2024

**Patrick Bravo**

President  
Summit County

**Deb Flora**

Vice-President  
Mahoning County

**David Mann**

Treasurer  
Lucas County

**Ric Wasserman**

Director  
Athens County

**Kathy Kelich**

Director  
Belmont County

**Ethan Harris**

Director  
Clark County

**Ricardo León**

Director  
Cuyahoga County

**Philip Denning**

Director  
Hamilton County

**Mike Grauwelman**

Director  
Montgomery County

**Dan Morganti**

Director  
Portage County

**Amy Hamrick**

Director  
Richland County

**Estee Miller**

Director  
Williams County

Dear Members of the Ohio House State and Local Government Committee:

In light of the busy Lame Duck session, we'd like to share our thoughts on Sub. HB 153 and address some questions from the House State and Local Committee Hearing on December 3. While we appreciate the efforts made in the sub-bill, we still express concern that these changes will add more layers of government bureaucracy that will hamper counties' efforts to address abandoned and blighted properties.

In Ohio, tax-foreclosed properties are typically auctioned by the county sheriff, with any surplus proceeds returned to the property owner. However, there is an exception for tax-foreclosed properties deemed **vacant and abandoned** under Ohio law, allowing these properties to be transferred to a county land bank without a sale. This is known as the expedited foreclosure process, which is what this bill seeks to change.

While the expedited tax foreclosure process is more expedient than a civil foreclosure, the process still takes a minimum of 1 year and provides ample opportunity for an owner of a vacant and abandoned property to come forward and acknowledge their interest in the property. Current law in Ohio does incorporate due diligence through the Board of Revisions process to protect identified owners in the same way that a civil foreclosure would protect said owners.

It's important to note that owners or interested parties can avoid this type of transfer by simply demonstrating that the property is not abandoned, which would then lead to a conventional sheriff's sale where they are able to collect any equity that should exist.

Sadly, we are seeing that many of the vacant and blighted properties being sold at Sheriff's sales, or a public sale such as Sub. HB 153 would require, are falling into even worse outcomes long-term as institutional investors continue the cycle of purchase, abandonment, and tax foreclosure.

While we understand the intentions put forward to protect the property owner, we are concerned this effort does not protect the surrounding neighbors or fix the additional strain these neglected properties put onto public safety agencies. We respectfully request that the committee does not move forward with HB 153 while we work to try and find a better compromise. Please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

Shawn Carvin  
Executive Director  
Ohio Land Bank Association