



Good morning Chairman Jones, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development, and Natural Resources. My name is Amy Klaben, and I am the co-founder and president of Move To PROSPER. Today, I am here to request that you support the Governor's recommended appropriation for our organization so that we can further our life-changing mission.

Move To PROSPER was founded with the goal of helping parents of young children move from lower-resourced areas to higher-resourced areas. Move to PROSPER makes affordable rental housing available in neighborhoods that offer access to opportunities, such as higher-resourced schools, safe neighborhoods, employment, sidewalks that lead to a public park, grocery stores, and other indicators of opportunities.

Move to PROSPER was created as an initiative with faculty in the City and Regional Planning program at The Ohio State University with community members and organizations from across Central Ohio. The program began in 2016 when I secured support from Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing and Neighborworks America to get started building this program that is unique to Central Ohio and the nation. Other early proponents and investors were The Columbus Foundation, The Jewish Foundation, Nationwide Children's Hospital, The Ohio State University and United Way of Central Ohio. What their investment allowed us to do was to initiate a program to expand the availability of affordable housing beyond the Housing Choice Voucher program.

I am a lawyer and have over 30 years experience in affordable housing development and management. In partnership with Steve Heiser, Senior Advisor at SVN/Wilson Commercial Group, we began to talk with local landlords about their willingness to not only reduce rents for a short period but alter their applicant criteria so that they could participate in a privately provided rent support program. Soon after, I discussed this idea with Dr. Rachel Kleit, who was the Section Head and Professor of City and Regional Planning at Ohio State and an affordable housing researcher. She is now Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs at The Ohio State University in the College of Engineering. She quickly came on board to be a co-founder and partner in developing and evaluating what eventually became Move to PROSPER.

During the initial planning period, the program's founders consulted at length with other units within Ohio State, including representatives of OSU Extension, the College of Education and Human Ecology, the College of Public Health, the College of Nursing, and the College of Social Work. The program owes a debt of gratitude to Dean Tom Gregoire of the College of Social Work for his in-kind support of the development of the coaching toolbox and participant program model that supports the people who choose to participate in Move to PROSPER.

Lori Ann Feibel, Board of Directors, Chair

Kim Campbell, Board of Directors, Vice Chair

Amy Klaben, President, amy.klaben@movetoprosper.org

www.movetoprosper.org

Move To PROSPER, 633 S. Parsons Ave., Columbus, OH 43206



Throughout the pilot, Move to PROSPER operated with OSU as our fiscal partner. Since August of 2022, Move to PROSPER has been functioning as a fully independent 501c3 nonprofit organization registered as Families Flourish, Inc., doing business as Move to PROSPER.

Our approach is unique in that we not only provide families with the tools and resources they need to move to higher-resourced areas, but we also offer ongoing support and advocacy to help them succeed and thrive in their new communities.

Here is how the program works:

Move to PROSPER is built as a three-year investment in a family. It includes financial and career coaching, monthly programming and partial rental support. Three years of rental support enables families to live in healthy, quality homes in a safe, higher-resourced Central Ohio neighborhood. Studies have shown that providing access to healthy, safe, affordable housing alone in higher-resourced neighborhoods will not provide the pathway to economic independence to the parents of children who move. The coaching and programs that we provide help parents to develop relationships for emotional support and family stability. MTP's theory of change is that by enabling families with children ages 13 and under to move into higher-resourced neighborhoods, participants will see a host of educational, social, wellness, and trauma reduction benefits.

We have seen the positive impact of our work firsthand. Families who have participated in our program have been able to improve their quality of life, access better educational opportunities for their children, and achieve financial stability for themselves.

The headline outcome for our 10-family pilot with OSU is that our moms raised their incomes by 58% or \$17,000 on average. That allowed our graduates to take on market-rate rent without any subsidy when their program concluded in July of last year.

Additionally, we saw far fewer trips to emergency rooms for children who had been suffering asthma and other upper respiratory ailments when they were in unsafe, unhealthy housing. We estimate that just among the 18 children in our pilot, those fewer ER trips alone resulted in estimated healthcare savings of \$75,000 over four years.

And the kids are thriving. In their new, higher-resourced schools teachers and staff were able to take the time to assess each student and get to know their needs. One young boy had been labeled as a bad kid and shuttled to five different schools in one school year in his old neighborhood. When he arrived at his new school, the staff was able to discern that he had a learning disability. Once they created a method of teaching that fit his way of learning, he was quickly brought up to grade level in reading and math. Three of our pilot students tested as gifted and were put into more challenging classrooms. Most students engaged in

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extracurricular activities and many benefitted from our partnership with the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. The vast majority of parents indicated their children had a good or very good adjustment to their new schools with improved academic outcomes.

When we compare the ZIP codes that our pilot families moved FROM to those they moved TO we found a couple of stark differences: The graduation rate was nearly 17% higher in the new neighborhoods, meaning our pilot children were surrounded by peers who not only expected to graduate high school, but go on to college or training or the military. We also compared the ZIP codes in terms of school rankings and saw a 40% jump in school success from the previous neighborhoods to the new ones.

We have transitioned from the pilot to an ongoing program beginning with serving our next 100 families in groups of 15 to 20 families twice a year. The first group of 15 families joined us in September 2022 and 18 families are in the process of being onboarded. The next group will join in the fall.

However, our work is far from done. There are still many families in Ohio who are struggling to make ends meet and provide their children with the opportunities they deserve. With your support, we can continue to expand our reach and help even more families move to higher-resourced areas. The Governor's recommended budget appropriation of \$2 million, over the biennium, will help us serve up to 100 families.

The State's investment in Move to PROSPER will not only help families, but this innovative, new model will also benefit Ohio as a whole. By providing families with the resources they need to thrive, we can help to build stronger, more vibrant communities and ensure that all Ohioans have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

I urge you to support Move to PROSPER and our mission to help parents of young children move from lower-resourced areas to higher-resourced areas. Your support will make a tangible difference in the lives of families across Ohio, and we are grateful for your consideration. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Amy Klaben
President and CEO, Move to PROSPER

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