

House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development, and Natural Resources

Honorable Chair Jones, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development, and Natural Resources, thank you for the opportunity to provide Interested Party Testimony regarding the state's Main Operating Budget for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025.

Written Testimony of: Andy Roberts- Executive Director of the Muskingum County Land Reutilization Corporation (MCLRC), 20 years in public administration, owner of a real estate development firm and have personally rehabbed seven distressed/foreclosed properties.

Brownfield Successes Over Past Two Years

Zanesville-Muskingum County is set on a path of rebirth and growth, as part of that the MCLRC is focused on addressing industrial and residential blight within our communities. Over the past two years we have taken ownership of the former Munson Elementary School, which blighted a neighborhood for 15+ years, and is currently being rebuilt into 44 units of workforce housing through partnerships with the Ohio Housing Finance Agency and Woda-Cooper Companies. A 28.5 acre Superfund Site on Linden Ave, Zanesville which is in the works to be fully remediated and transitioned into a mixed use development with the assistance of Ohio EPA, USEPA and the City of Zanesville. As well as the 14.5 acre former Mosaic Tile Factory on Pershing Road in Zanesville, which is being demolished and remediated as I type, and is being considered for a new County Jail location. The first and third of these projects are being completed with Brownfield and Demolition monies allocated from the Ohio Department of Development.

Demolishing is good, reutilizing is better. When we took ownership of the three aforementioned properties, we had a plan of action to deal with them, but it was going to saddle the MCLRC with debt payments for the next 15-20 years, and we would not have seen action on some of them for probably another 5 years as funding became available. In short, and not trying to be overdramatic, the Brownfield Remediation Fund was the answer to our dreams. These properties were dramatically (and negatively) impacting the surrounding residential areas property values, and thereby increasing crime and low tax collection rates. Along side the redevelopment of these sites we are standing up Target Areas, where we will look to further compound these investments into properties also much in need.

Addressing the Ongoing Need for Revitalization

As much as these three projects will go to revitalizing parts of our community, the transition from a rust-belt community still has a long way to go. We have several other projects that would make further improvements to the area and hope to partner with State and Federal agencies to make that a reality as well.

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 \$350 million to this program in the FY24-25 budget.**

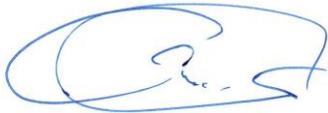
The initial investment of \$350 million granted 188 cleanup grants, which is the final step in the remediation process to address environmental contamination and allow these brownfields to become new industrial and commercial sites, new housing, mixed-use space, or developable land.

The State of Ohio is stronger than ever, and with individuals looking to make large investments in our communities we need to be positioned to put skin in the game as well. Our legacy cities are once again becoming bastions for private investment, and we hope the State will partner with us to see those investments and make some of our own alongside.

An additional investment of \$350 million to this program will allow the 125 projects that received an assessment to compete for cleanup dollars. In addition to these 125 projects, the need for brownfield grant dollars remains. The final round for applications through ODOD opened and closed in less than 3 business days due to limited funding remaining and an overwhelming amount of applications.

Conclusion

We as a State are on a roll, lets keep it going and get our communities positioned to take full advantage of all the redevelopment opportunities available. I look forward to seeing the Brownfield Remediation Fund being refreshed with a new round of funding and thank you all for your prior commitments.



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