

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: _____

Name: _____

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): _____

Position/Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Best Contact Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): _____

Specific Issue: _____

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? _____

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

Senate Finance Committee
Interested Party Testimony, Sub. House Bill 33 (Edwards)

Written Only
Jenny Carter-Cornell, APR
Senior Consultant – Funding Specialist
Verdantas
May 15, 2023

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present interested party testimony on Substitute House Bill 33 (HB33).

My name is Jenny Carter-Cornell and I am a Senior Consultant – Funding Specialist for Verdantas. Verdantas is a full-service consulting company in the environmental, infrastructure, and energy industries with more than 850 employees. Hull & Associates, LLC became Verdantas in January 2022 and is now part of a company with hundreds of professionals primarily in the engineering and science fields. Hull was founded in Toledo in 1980. Our Great Lakes service area in Ohio has approximately 145 professionals in offices in Dublin, Toledo, Newark, Bedford (Cleveland area), Mason (Cincinnati area), and St. Clairsville. For more than 30 years, we have been leading experts in Ohio’s brownfield program, directing hundreds of Ohio Voluntary Action Program projects since the program’s inception and successfully completing 138 No Further Action letters, 125 (+ five pending) Covenants Not to Sue, and 34 (+ two pending/in process) approved Urban Setting Designations.

Brownfield Successes Over Past Two Years

Recognizing the challenge presented to Ohio by the presence of brownfields, 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 this program, and the Ohio Department of Development for the successful administration of this program over the last two years.

The \$350 million dedicated to the BRF program provided grants to 313 projects in 83 of Ohio’s 88 counties. While this is a significant investment in the assessment and cleanup of brownfields, the need remains for grant dollars to remediate and redevelop these blighted brownfields into productive use.

At the same time, the legislature made a significant investment in Ohio’s Land Banks with a \$150 million investment in the Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Program (Demo). This program is helping local communities demolish nearly 3,700 dilapidated commercial and residential buildings in 87 of Ohio’s 88 counties. Communities across Ohio are eliminating blighted and abandoned structures, creating new opportunities for economic and residential development, and revitalizing neighborhoods.

Together, these programs are making transformational impacts across the entire state.

Addressing the Ongoing Need for Revitalization

While the as-introduced budget zeroed out funding for the BRF and Demo programs, we are immensely grateful to your colleagues in the Ohio House of Representatives who restored funding to these two

programs at the same levels as in the 2021 budget - \$350 million to the BRF, \$150 million to Demo – over the next two years.

The initial investment of \$350 million was allocated to 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 other developable land.

Verdantas helped our public and private sector clients prepare 23 successful grants (13 remediation/10 assessments) securing over \$76 million through this program. These brownfields included old dumps, former auto plants and other manufacturing facilities, a chemical mixing plant, and an old port terminal facility. Many of these properties were vacant for years as community leaders and developers waited for the opportunity to secure funding to address these complicated sites. Most of these properties are in prime locations and will soon have thriving new uses that will provide significant investment, new jobs, and venues that will improve the quality of life for residents.

While many sites will be cleaned up through this program, 125 projects received assessment dollars, which merely determines the contamination present on the site, but does not provide cleanup dollars to complete the work. Without additional funding, these 125 projects will likely remain contaminated and unable to move into productive use to benefit the economy.

We believe strongly that each of the 10 grants Verdantas helped prepare for assessments will need to be remediated. Most of these are not simple sites to address, and without additional funding, they will continue to languish and many will continue to present health and safety risks to nearby residents and businesses.

An additional investment of \$350 million to the BRF program will allow the 125 projects that received an assessment grant 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 three business days due to limited funding remaining and an overwhelming number of applications.

Verdantas can attest that the demand absolutely exists for additional rounds of funding. In addition to our knowledge of many ideal properties through our day-to-day work, last spring and summer we turned down several potential applicants requesting our services to help prepare Round 3 submittals. Because their projects would not be ready for submittal on July 1, the first day of the Round 3 application period, we told them that it was not a wise investment of time and money for application preparation since we anticipated that the remaining funds in the program would be allocated quickly and likely that first day. This proved to be good advice, as one of our clients who submitted their application within the first 15 minutes of the portal opening on July 1 only received partial funding, as all remaining funds were spent on the applications submitted just minutes, maybe seconds, before that one.

The \$150 million initial investment in the Demo program resulted in the demolition of nearly 3,700 dilapidated commercial and residential buildings in 87 of Ohio's 88 counties. Ohio communities are revitalizing neighborhoods and business corridors by eliminating these blighted and abandoned structures. The additional investment guarantees that this important work can continue.

We greatly appreciate the Senate's support for the renewed funding for the BRF and Demo programs in HB33.

Conclusion

Chair Dolan, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 33. I welcome the opportunity to share additional information on our experiences with the recent program, our strong beliefs that an additional \$500 million toward brownfields and demolition projects would continue to be transformative, or how it would be ideal to eventually have a consistent and predictable funding stream to address these underutilized site throughout the state to address environmental conditions, remove redevelopment obstacles, draw additional investment by developers and end users, and improve the quality of life for Ohio residents.