



**Senate Committee on General Government  
Interested Party Testimony, Sub. House Bill 33 (Edwards)  
Aaron Clapper, Director of Outreach & Projects, Greater Ohio Policy Center  
Wednesday, May 10, 2023**

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

My name is Aaron Clapper, and I am the Director of Outreach and Projects for the Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC), a statewide non-profit organization that champions revitalization and sustainable growth in Ohio's cities and metros. Our mission is to improve the communities of Ohio through smart growth strategies and research for a revitalized Ohio.

## **Brownfield Revitalization & Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Programs**

### ***Successes Over Past Two Years***

GOPC is Ohio's lead brownfield advocate, coming before the legislature over the past several years advocating for grant funding to redevelop blighted brownfields in Ohio's communities into productive, community-responsive sites. 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 creation of this program, and thank the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) for its successful administration of this program over the past two years.**

The BRF's \$350 million 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 these blighted and abandoned structures, creating new opportunities for economic and residential development and revitalizing neighborhoods.

**Taken together, these programs are making a transformational impact across the entire state.**

### ***Addressing the Ongoing Need for Revitalization***

While we were disappointed that 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 in the BRF 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, recreational, or developable land. The additional investment ensures that the 125 projects which previously received assessment grants can proceed with applications for clean-up funds, while also permitting those projects which were shut-out of the first phase of grants the opportunity to compete for clean-up and assessment dollars.

Likewise, the \$150 million initial investment in the Demo program has resulted in the demolition of nearly 3,700 dilapidated commercial and residential buildings in 87 of Ohio's 88 counties. Communities across Ohio are eliminating these blighted and abandoned structures, creating new opportunities for economic and residential development and revitalizing neighborhoods. The additional investment guarantees that this important work can continue.

Just yesterday, GOPC hosted Ohio's first Brownfields Conference in six years. We were honored to have the opportunity to welcome more than 200 local government officials, certified professionals, engineers, construction and demolition experts, environmental professionals, attorneys and more, all of whom have been actively involved in the work of remediating brownfields these past two years. All are looking forward to continuing the important work of converted underutilized and contaminated sites into new development. The energy at yesterday's conference was a testament to the demand and readiness to leverage state investments.

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

## **Conclusion**

Chair Rulli, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 33. I appreciate your attention and will be happy to address any questions you or the members of the committee may have.