



**Proponent testimony submitted to the
Senate General Government Committee
House Bill 33**

**Torey Hollingsworth, Executive Director of the Ohio CDC Association
Paul Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of CleveLawn-Home
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Chair Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora, and Members of the Senate General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 33. My name is Torey Hollingsworth, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio CDC Association (OCDCA), a statewide membership organization of nearly 300 locally-based rural and urban nonprofits that work to rebuild neighborhoods through initiatives such as economic development, affordable housing, financial education and local food access.

I'm here to ask for your continued support of the Main Street Job Recovery Program, which was created as a pilot program in the last budget to create employment opportunities, support small businesses and startups, and increase self-sufficiency among Ohioans—particularly those with low-to-moderate incomes—while working to strengthen and restore local communities.

Under the program, nonprofit organizations apply for grants to address the economic needs of individuals and families through the creation of permanent business development and employment opportunities. This bottom-up approach to economic development focuses on job creation for Ohioans while rebuilding Main Streets by addressing priorities such as blight remediation, vacant properties, housing, and the reentry population. The program was funded at \$500,000 over the last biennium, and I'm excited to share there was a very high level of interest and more worthy applications than funding available from nonprofit organizations across the state.

The Department of Development asked OCDCA to administer the program and work with grantees to track program success based on the number of businesses created and expanded, the number of jobs created, and the amount of funds leveraged as a result of the program, which we did gratis because we believe in this program. We also administer the state's Microbusiness Development Program.

We received 21 compelling applications pitching unique and transformative projects across the state. Collectively, these projects would have created or retained over 375 jobs. For the pilot we were able to fund three projects.

One of the award recipients is with me today, I'd like to introduce Paul Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of CleveLawn-Home to share his experience with the program.



Thank you, Chairman Rulli and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to speak with you today. As Torey mentioned, my name is Paul Fitzpatrick, and I am the Executive Director of CleveLawn-Home, a nonprofit in Cleveland that was started in May of 2019. Under the guidance of our founding Board president, we developed an organization built on Maslow's theory. Our mission is to reduce poverty and violence in our community by providing meaningful workforce development opportunities. CleveLawn-Home specializes in training Justice-involved populations, at risk youth, people in active recovery, and the homeless in full property and ground maintenance, small-scale residential and commercial renovations and equipment maintenance and repairs.

The grant we received from the Main Street Job Recovery Program has allowed us to create three full time and two part time positions for individuals from our target populations. In my conversations with these individuals, I've been told that their employment and training have provided them with the economic means to start to pull their lives out of distress, which in turn has provided them with a sense of pride, belonging and purpose. It has also helped our community because as these individuals started to receive paychecks, they became less dependent on social services and started to pay into the very systems that supported them in the past; SSI, state and federal taxes, etc.

The work we do at Cleveland is not measured in the amount of grass we cut or repairs we do; it is measured in the number of fines paid, licenses issued, paroles and probations completed or not, homes stabilized, and lives changed for the better. I know this because I am not just the person privileged to lead this organization, I am also a restored citizen after serving over 18 years in prison and having recently celebrated 25 years in active recovery myself. Because people like my mentor, the Ohio Parole system and more than a few educators believed in me, I have the privilege today to present our organization and our successes to you. My organization today gets to make a difference in our communities in part because of the funding provided by the Main Street Job Recovery Program. It has changed the lives for the better of six individuals that otherwise would not have had such an opportunity.

Thank you for your time today and allowing me to speak before you.

Torey:

In total, the three projects that were funded by the program are expected to create 24 full time jobs, 6 businesses, and leverage more than \$1 million in additional investment.



I ask for your support of \$1 million each fiscal year currently included in the budget to continue this important program. Funds will be used to support up to 12 new projects across the state over the biennium.

Nonprofit organizations are uniquely positioned to spur economic development by leveraging public resources to draw additional private investments. The Main Street Job Recovery Program is a powerful tool for Ohio communities to create permanent skilled jobs while strengthening and restoring their communities. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.