

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 271

SENATE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

JUNE 25, 2024

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Chair Blessing, Vice-Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Smith, and respected members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 271 on behalf of Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio, LLC. The Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio works to secure safe, affordable housing for low-income families and establish stable neighborhoods through effective legal representation. We provide a wide range of legal services including eviction and property-tax foreclosure defense for low-income residents in Brown, Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton, Highland, and Warren counties.

An important component of home affordability is the real estate tax burden on a home. In 2023, four of the seven counties in Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio's service area—Butler, Clermont, Clinton, and Hamilton—experienced historic property valuation and property-tax increases, creating a crisis for low-income families. In Butler County, property values rose on average 37% and property taxes increased on average 13%.¹ Clermont County property values increased 30% and taxes increased 17% on average.² Property values in Hamilton County increased 28% and property taxes increased 12% on average.³ Clinton County also saw dramatic increases in property values and taxes.⁴ But the countywide average do not tell the full story. The property valuation and tax increases were not distributed equally within counties. We are seeing the highest property value and tax increases in our low-income and minority neighborhoods. Some neighborhoods have experienced increases three or four times the countywide average.⁵

Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio's remaining three counties—Brown, Highland, and Warren—will do their six-year property reappraisal this year. It is likely that they will also experience historic valuation and tax increases.

Low-income families cannot withstand these dramatic tax increases. Without intervention from the state legislature, many homeowners will fall behind on their property tax bills and eventually lose their homes through foreclosure, upending their lives and destabilizing their neighborhoods. Landlords are passing these historic property-tax increases on to their tenants by raising rents, making our ongoing affordable housing crisis even worse.

The property-tax circuit breaker proposed in Senate Bill 271 would provide critical relief to low-income Ohio homeowners and renters. Low-income Ohioans pay a disproportionate amount of their household income on property-taxes.⁶ By providing a tax credit or direct rebate to homeowners and renters whose property tax burden exceeds more than five percent of their income, Senate Bill 271 will target relief to our residents with the highest property tax burden. In addition to other reforms such as increasing the homestead exemption amount, Senate Bill 271 will help low-income families retain affordable housing.

¹ <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/politics/2024/01/30/why-property-taxes-and-values-are-up-everywhere/72369725007/>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ <https://www.wnewsj.com/2023/11/08/commissioners-vote-to-lower-millage-rate-for-property-taxes/>.

⁵ *See, e.g.,* https://www.hamiltoncountyauditor.org/pdf/news/2024/2023_Tax_Aggregate_Report.pdf.

⁶ *See, e.g.,* [Levied: Racial and Economic Unjust Property Taxes — eruka](#)

We urge the Senate to pass Senate Bill 271 to protect low-income families throughout Ohio.
Thank you for this opportunity to provide this written testimony.