

Senate Committee on Ways & Means  
Senate Bill 244 – Proponent Testimony

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Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 244. My name is Denise VanLeer, Executive Director Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation (FRDC) and I care about this issue because FRDC is a community development corporation that advocates for the Fairfax neighborhood, a low-income neighborhood on the eastside of Cleveland, Ohio. I encourage passage of Senate Bill 244 to help low-income homeowners across Ohio by giving their local governments the authority to limit increases in assessed value by creating Residential Stability Zones.

Like other people who care about housing in Ohio, I understand that it's a complicated issue. From housing supply to property taxes, we need many different solutions to deal with the many ways housing has become unaffordable to too many Ohioans.

I am especially concerned about property taxes and how the process of reassessing property values can displace people – especially longtime homeowners. I'm concerned because many of the residents that I support are low income and are in danger of being displaced. Large infrastructure investments and proximity to anchor institutions have impacted the community, with increased market rate housing construction and overall growth in property values. While our organization encourages population and property value growth, we feel that protection is needed for our largely African American, legacy homeowners who have been the backbone of this community since the 1920's.

**That's why I am submitting testimony in support of one issue in particular: Residential Stability Zones, as presented in Senate Bill 244.** Residential Stability Zones would offer some targeted relief from skyrocketing property taxes to low-income homeowners. Modeling Ohio's existing law on residential tax abatement, Senate Bill 244 would authorize local municipalities to implement a permissive program tailored to their residents, but always within guardrails to focus these programs on long-term homeowners who are low-income.

Residential Stability Zones could help many different types of Ohioans. They could help seniors stay in their homes and benefit from new development and investment that happens around them, without having to worry about taxing them out of their homes. It could help families with kids stay in a neighborhood where they've been living for years, keeping those kids in the same schools they're used to and in the same community of support. And Residential Stability Zones would ease pressure on developers who want to bring investment into our communities, but

often face the fears and worries from longtime residents scared that new development would displace them by increasing property taxes and making their homes suddenly unaffordable. I understand that the General Assembly is considering many other proposals and bills to deal with housing and property taxes. Senate Bill 244 is just one tool, and I understand that it is not a silver bullet. But, if passed into law, it would make a meaningful difference for thousands of Ohioans. And, in combination with existing programs and other bills under consideration, it can be another tool to help preserve homeownership for Ohioans.