

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

Judith E. Allen
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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 Judith E. Allen and I care about this issue because I am 80 years old and very much threatened by the possibility of losing my home to high costs, very much including increasing property taxes. Also, as I read it Senate Bill 244 could exclude me from relief. Senate Bill 244 would help low-income homeowners across Ohio by giving their local governments the authority to limit increases in assessed value by creating Residential Stability Zones.

However, it seems the bill defines low income just below my income, by about \$2000. This, at the same time, puts me in a position of needing 6 to \$15000 more a year than I make to cover all expenses including rising property taxes. I encourage the Senate to more carefully define the income limits for senior citizens to include low and very low middle class folks. 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 I am one of those folks possibly facing the loss of my home, and roof over my head. The anxiety and sleepless nights this creates is in a nutshell terrifying.

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 longterm 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 will displace them by increasing property taxes and making their homes suddenly unaffordable.

Personally, I also believe that Senate Bill 244 and Residential Stability Zones are a good idea because right now they are the only option out there.

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.

Respectfully,
Judith E. Allen