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House Community Revitalization Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Re: Committee Testimony HB 585

Chairman Click, Vice Chair Mullins, Ranking Member Brewer, and distinguished members of the House Community Revitalization Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 585.

My name is Critty Buenconsejo, and I am here today on behalf of Creative Housing located in Central Ohio to support this legislation. Together with Gina Gehm of Inclusive Housing Resources, Chris West of North Coast Community Homes and Carri Paschal of Inclusive Neighborhoods Housing Corporation, we are grateful for the efforts of Representatives Odioso and Lett on this legislation which addresses a critical bottleneck in housing for Ohioans with developmental disabilities.

The problem at hand is that today's housing models for those with developmental disabilities are often limited by rigid funding rules that do not reflect the current and evolving needs of our communities. They fall short of meeting the voice and choice of persons with developmental disabilities.

The solution is to modernize the use of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) Community Capital Assistance (CCA) dollars. HB 585 provides the flexibility needed to develop a wider variety of affordable options including accessory dwelling units and neighboring units on adjacent sites to ensure that 'home' is a place of true independence and choice.

Prior testimony by Gina Gehm provided data on Ohio's housing shortage, highlighted challenges faced by persons with developmental disabilities in accessing affordable housing in the community, and identified limitations of the use of DODD Community Capital Assistance dollars. As such, my testimony focuses on illustrating to the House Community Revitalization Committee how HB 585 will improve lives in your districts by supporting the development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and neighboring units on adjacent sites.

Supported living housing providers find themselves competing for scarce limited affordable housing funding and available land. As noted in prior testimony, CCA dollars provided wonderful housing opportunities but in limited fashion. By supporting ADUs (think of granny flats), HB 585 would allow organizations like ours to increase their housing inventory without the need to acquire new land. Specific to Creative Housing's portfolio, 74% of our properties could support an ADU equating to a common-sense, cost-effective housing option for an additional 269 people.

Additionally, supported living housing providers play a part in how efficiently state dollars are utilized for Home and Community Based Services. Smart housing development can support cost-effective services helping to stabilize county board budgets which promotes sustainability of DD services by maximizing the reach of every dollar. By allowing CCA dollars to support community housing for properties that neighbor each other, HB 585 would support fiscally responsible cost-effective care and prevent institutionalization for people who choose to share Home and Community Based Supports.

HB 585 encourages social interaction and community participation in alignment with budgetary discipline across state departments. If HB 585 Passes, DODD would have the flexibility to allow CCA funds to support diverse housing options that are fiscally responsible and honors the voice and choice of individuals with developmental disabilities.

In summary, House Bill 585 is a common-sense solution that transforms a rigid funding stream into a flexible tool for independence. By passing this legislation, you are ensuring that Ohioans with developmental disabilities have access to a true variety of housing options, including ADUs and other innovative models that allow them to remain integrated in our communities.

Chairman Click and members of the committee, I urge your favorable passage of House Bill 585. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to all Ohio citizens. Those of us standing before you provide the majority of the supported living homes for persons with developmental disabilities in Ohio. We are honored to have the opportunity to advocate on behalf of those we serve and are happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.