

House Development Committee
Interested Party Testimony, House Bill 96 (Stewart)
Lindsay Crow, National Real Estate Market Leader, Associate Vice President, Verdantas
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Chair Hoops, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and members of the House Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 96, the main operating budget for fiscal years 2026 and 2027.

My name is Lindsay Crow and I am the National Real Estate Market Leader with Verdantas. I am testifying today to respectfully request the inclusion of continued funding for the Ohio Brownfield Remediation Program (BRP) in House Bill 96, the state's Main Operating Budget.

Verdantas is a full-service consulting company in the environmental, water, and energy transition infrastructure markets. In the State of Ohio, we employ seven Ohio Voluntary Action Program Certified Professionals dedicated to Ohio's brownfield program. For more than 30 years, we have been leaders in Ohio's brownfield assessment, remediation, and redevelopment efforts, directing hundreds of Ohio Voluntary Action Program projects since the program's inception.

The Ohio General Assembly created the BRP in 2021 with an initial appropriation of \$350 million. Two years later, lawmakers renewed the program with a second appropriation of \$350 million. To date, the program has been responsible for the cleanup or assessment of more than 600 brownfield sites in 86 of Ohio's 88 counties. These results not only show that brownfields are indeed a statewide problem but also show that there are opportunities for new economic development and revitalization in every region of Ohio.

Verdantas helped our public and private sector clients and Land Banks prepare 11 applications requesting \$9.9 million in the last round of funding due to ODOD two weeks ago. We helped Land Banks and other applicants prepare 41 successful BRP applications since 2021, securing \$119 million in grant awards. Many of these properties are in prime locations and will soon have thriving new uses that will provide significant investments, new jobs, new housing units, and venues that will improve the quality of life for Ohio residents.

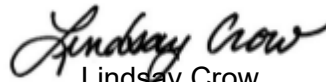
As impressive as the state's prior brownfield funding allocations and the resulting projects have been, the progress made over the past four years has just barely scratched the surface of what is needed to address the brownfield remediation needs in Ohio. Of the grants that have been awarded since 2021, 279 have been assessment grants. Assessments only determine the scope of contamination that may exist on a site. The majority of these locations will need cleanup funds to ensure they are made available for future redevelopment opportunities. This is why it is critical to continue funding for the Brownfield Remediation Program for at least the next two years.

The achievements of the Ohio's BRP should be highly commended; however, the implementation of the current program can be improved. State Representatives Thomas Hall and Bride Sweeney proposed important changes to the BRP that will shift the program from a first come, first serve model to a merit-based system, which scores applications reviewed by a panel of experts working with the Ohio Department of Development. This model mirrors Ohio's first brownfield program, the Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund (CORF). The CORF was responsible for producing \$1.16 billion in one-time contributions and contributing \$1.4 billion annually to the state's Gross Domestic Product. We can attest to the success of that program and the value of a scoring-based system, as our team helped our clients secure 75 successful

grants worth over \$124 million in that program's duration from 2002-2012. The methodologies and processes established through that program provided the structure and predictable set of factors that allowed applicants the ability to determine whether a project had the strong qualifications to pursue funding.

As an individual directly engaged in this work, I firmly believe that implementing these changes is essential not just for the remediation of brownfields, but for continuing to position Ohio as a prime destination for business expansion. By supporting a continued appropriation for the brownfield remediation program of at least \$100 million - \$150 million per year, along with the programmatic changes being proposed by Representatives Hall and Sweeney, we will unlock the potential of numerous sites across the state, making them viable for new developments. This will not only preserve the state's valuable agricultural land and green spaces but also attract new businesses; generate significant revenue; and create quality jobs, housing, and new opportunities for Ohioans.

Chair Hoops and members of the House Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide this interested party testimony for continued brownfield funding and the resulting redevelopment successes in Ohio.



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