

Testimony Opposing Ohio House Bill 1(HB1)

Wei Gao

May 17, 2025

Dear Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Public Safety Committee,

My name is Wei Gao, and I am writing as a permanent resident of the United States, a homeowner, and most importantly, a parent of a 6-year-old U.S. citizen. I strongly oppose HB1, a bill that seeks to prohibit individuals from China and other countries—including lawful permanent residents like myself—from purchasing real estate in the state under the justification of national security.

I am a permanent resident of the United States who has lived in Ohio for ten years. I graduated from the University of Cincinnati and currently work as a senior accountant in Ohio. This state has become my home—not just in a legal sense, but in every way that matters. I pay taxes, contribute to my community, and most importantly, I am raising my 6-year-old son here. He is a U.S. citizen, and we bought our home last year in a neighborhood where he feels safe, supported, and part of a community.

My house is not just a property—it is a home. It is where my child plays, learns, and grows. It is the center of our family life, and it gives us the stability that every family deserves. HB1 would force us to give all of that up simply because of my national origin—despite my legal status, contributions, and commitment to this state and country.

HB1 directly threatens our home and our stability. If passed, this bill would prohibit lawful residents like myself—simply because of our Chinese national origin—from owning property in Ohio. This means that people like me, who have followed every legal step, invested in Ohio's economy and society, and worked hard to belong, would be forced to sell our homes and leave the communities. Children would be forced to leave their schools and friends. Families would be displaced. The local economy would suffer from sudden property sales and a loss of trust among residents. HB1 sends a discriminatory message that lawful, contributing residents are not welcome because of where they come from.

The justification of “national security” is vague and overly broad. By singling out individuals from specific countries, HB1 would create a class of second-tier residents. Permanent residents and other legally authorized residents already undergo rigorous vetting by the U.S. government. This bill adds another layer of exclusion—not based on behavior, but on ancestry. Furthermore, HB1 would not enhance national security. It is overly broad, poorly defined, and unfairly punishes individuals who have no connection to any wrongdoing. The real effect would be a message to international students, skilled workers, and immigrants that Ohio is not a place where they are welcome—even if they follow the law, contribute to society, and want to build a life here.

HB1 would discourage foreign professionals, students, and investors from contributing to Ohio's economy. It would shrink the pool of potential buyers, reducing demand and hurting property values. At a time when Ohio should be attracting global talent and investment, this bill does the

opposite. HB1 will damage Ohio's reputation and push skilled workers and families to other states that are more welcoming and economically forward-thinking.

HB1 is in clear violation of the constitutional protections and the federal Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act of 1968, a cornerstone of civil rights legislation, prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, or financing of housing based on national origin, race, or ethnicity. HB1 opens the door to discrimination not only against foreign nationals but also against U.S. citizens and lawful residents of Asian descent and immigrants from other countries.

This bill exacerbates xenophobia and racial discrimination. It undermines the values of fairness, equality, and inclusion that this state claims to uphold. It also contradicts existing federal laws and principles of equal protection, setting a dangerous precedent for future legislation.

I respectfully urge lawmakers and the relevant agencies to reject HB1. Let us protect the families who have chosen to invest their lives and hopes in this state. And let us uphold the reputation of our state as a place of opportunity, not exclusion.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Wei Gao