

Testimony of Omar Ashraf

In Support of House Bill 1 – The Ohio Property Protection Act

Before the Ohio House of Representatives

May 19th, 2025 | Columbus, Ohio

Chairman, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my testimony today in support of House Bill 1, also known as the Ohio Property Protection Act. My name is Omar Ashraf, and I am a proud U.S. citizen and an immigrant who has called Ohio home for many years. I run a small business, pay taxes, and actively contribute to my local community. I stand before you not only as a business owner, but as someone deeply invested in the well-being and security of our great state.

As someone who immigrated to the United States and chose this country because of its rule of law, opportunity, and commitment to national security, I believe it is both wise and necessary for the State of Ohio to take steps to ensure that our strategic resources—particularly land near military bases, key infrastructure, and agricultural zones—are not subject to control or acquisition by hostile foreign actors.

House Bill 1 is not about race. It is not about exclusion. It is about prudence, security, and common sense.

I've read the bill in full. I've spoken to several of the sponsors. And I want to say clearly: these lawmakers are not motivated by racism or animosity toward immigrants. In fact, many of them have supported policies that have helped minority entrepreneurs, immigrant-owned businesses, and new Americans. Their intent with this legislation is to address a very real and growing concern across the country: foreign adversaries quietly acquiring land and assets near sensitive locations that could be used against the interests of the United States.

This is not just a theoretical issue. It's already happening—and it's already being addressed in other parts of the country.

Texas, Florida, Montana, North Dakota, and other states have enacted or introduced similar legislation to protect farmland and land near military installations from foreign influence. These efforts often align with national security briefings and alerts issued by the FBI, the Department of Defense, and the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS). The problem is not unique to Ohio—but if we wait, we risk becoming vulnerable.

Additionally, it is already standard practice across numerous industries in the United States to screen individuals and entities against the **Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctions list**. Financial institutions, vehicle dealerships, escrow companies, and other regulated sectors are required to conduct these checks when opening accounts, facilitating high-value transactions, or engaging in business with foreign parties. This is not considered controversial or burdensome—it is viewed as a fundamental component of responsible compliance and risk

management. Given this precedent, it is both reasonable and appropriate for Ohio to apply similar due diligence when it comes to the transfer of sensitive property, particularly land near military installations or critical infrastructure. Implementing these safeguards is not discriminatory—it is common-sense policy aligned with national standards, and in today's global environment, it is long overdue.

Some have expressed concern that this bill could be used to discriminate against immigrants or ethnic communities. Let me be clear: **House Bill 1 does not prevent immigrants or naturalized citizens from buying land.** In fact, **Section D(4) of the bill explicitly protects individuals like myself**—U.S. citizens, regardless of where we were born. The bill targets foreign governments and entities tied to adversarial regimes—not everyday Americans who happen to have immigrant roots.

I also appreciate that the bill includes pathways for exceptions, allows for due process, and directs responsibility to county and state authorities rather than creating vague or unchecked enforcement mechanisms. It takes a measured approach and reflects the careful work of public servants who are trying to protect Ohio's future without infringing on civil liberties.

As an immigrant who believes deeply in the American system, I feel a responsibility to speak out when policies could be misunderstood or misrepresented. And I also feel a responsibility to support good policy when I see it. House Bill 1 is a necessary and well-structured safeguard for our state and our children's future.

This bill is not an attack on diversity. It is a defense of sovereignty. It does not close the doors of opportunity—it secures the foundation on which those opportunities are built. I urge you to pass this bill and to stand strong for a secure and prosperous Ohio.

Thank you for your time and for your service to the people of this state.

Respectfully submitted,
Omar Ashraf
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