

Testimony Against Substitute H.B. 1

Submitted by: Di Li

Testifying as Opponent

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Di Li, and I live in New Albany, Ohio. I respectfully urge you to vote NO on Substitute House Bill 1.

I came to the United States in 2010 to pursue my education, earning my bachelor's degree and later my master's degree in 2016. In 2017, I moved to Columbus to begin my professional career in accounting and finance. Like many immigrants, I followed every legal step required to study, work, and contribute to this country. Yet nearly a decade later, I am still waiting in the employment-based green card backlog due to country-of-birth limits.

During this long process, many of us live in uncertainty for years. The average life expectancy in Ohio is about 76 years, yet highly skilled immigrants often face 10 to 20 years or more waiting for permanent residency. That means a significant portion of our lives is spent waiting—while working, paying taxes, and contributing to the communities we already call home.

Despite that uncertainty, Ohio has become my home. I have lived in the Columbus area for nearly nine years. I work, pay taxes, and volunteer in my community, including at the Nationwide Children's Hospital Marathon and USA Climbing events. As an only child living far from my parents, the friendships and community I have built here mean everything to me. I have watched many friends meet their spouses, buy homes, and start families here in Ohio. Columbus has truly become our second home.

That is why this bill is so troubling.

Substitute H.B. 1 would prohibit certain immigrants from owning property within ten miles of an extremely broad list of “critical infrastructure.” Because this definition includes electrical grids, telecommunications networks, water and sewer systems, fiber-optic networks, and broadcasting facilities, the restriction could cover large portions of cities and communities across Ohio. In practice, many law-abiding immigrants could be prevented from buying a home simply because of where they were born.

Owning a home is not just a financial decision—it represents stability, belonging, and the ability to build a long-term future in a community. For immigrants already waiting decades in the legal immigration system, the ability to own a home is one of the few ways we can begin to put down roots.

This bill does not distinguish between foreign governments and ordinary people like me—people who came here because we believe in the values of this country. Instead, it singles out individuals based on nationality. That principle contradicts the fundamental American promise of equal protection and fairness under the law, values rooted in the United States Constitution.

America has always been strongest when it judges people by their character, their work, and their contributions—not by where they were born.

Policies like this also risk harming Ohio’s future. Our universities, hospitals, and businesses rely on talented international students and professionals. Legislation that restricts rights based on national origin sends a chilling message to the very people who help drive innovation and economic growth in our state.

If there are legitimate national security concerns, they should be addressed through targeted, evidence-based reviews of specific transactions, not sweeping restrictions that treat thousands of law-abiding residents as potential threats.

I am just one of many immigrants working hard, paying taxes, volunteering, and trying to build a stable life in Ohio. We love this state. We want to stay here, raise families here, and contribute to the communities that have welcomed us.

I respectfully ask you to consider both the constitutional principles and the human impact of this legislation and vote NO on Substitute House Bill 1. The strength of this country has always been its commitment to equal treatment under the law. When legislation restricts basic rights based on nationality, it moves us away from the constitutional principles that have guided America for generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.