



---

**homeport****Written Testimony on Sub. House Bill 96 – State Operating Budget  
Ohio Senate Finance Committee****May 23, 2025**

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Weinstein, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the staff and board of Homeport, a central Ohio based, mission driven non-profit committed to the creation of quality housing that is affordable, supports individuals and families, and strengthens communities.

I appreciate the opportunity to lift the variety of housing needs we see in our region and that are mirrored across the state. Across the region we work with Ohio citizens burdened by the increased costs of housing, including property taxes, insurance costs, and utility costs. Without intervention these pressures result in housing instability, displacement, evictions, and foreclosures.

At the same time, local communities are contending with housing shortages that threaten workforce stability and long-term economic growth requiring more and more investments in social services, public safety, and community programs.

Housing is key to ensuring the continued success of Ohio's economic growth and to remain competitive in the global marketplace. Housing is an important infrastructure and requires the same type of investment that we commit to roads and utilities. Sub. House Bill 96 presents an important opportunity to advance policy tools that directly respond to the two challenges of affordability and availability that we are facing today.

Homeport is aligned with the goals of the Home Matters to Ohio coalition and support their housing recommendations in this year's budget deliberations. Additionally, there are several key provisions of Sub. HB 96 that I want to express support for due to the direct impact on Ohio's housing future.

**Strengthening Tools to Expand Housing Access****1.) Expand the State Low-Income Housing Tax Credit**

Homeport is one of the developers that has been selected to receive Ohio Low Income Housing Tax Credits. With these resources we will continue the development of new affordable apartments next door to the Easton Town Center in Columbus, Ohio. This state-level incentive has attracted new private investment and resources for affordable rental home development. This is a highly competitive resource which the market has demonstrated interest and capacity to use.



# homeport

Expanding the current allocation would immediately increase housing production. I encourage lawmakers to expand this tool to a minimum of \$200 million annually so that developers can move forward on projects across the state that are ready to build.

## **2.) Improve Welcome Home Ohio**

We support the ongoing refinements to Welcome Home Ohio, which has already catalyzed new single-family, for-sale home construction. For over 25 years, Homeport has been developing for-sale homes to provide attainable housing but also neighborhood stability and wealth building opportunities. The proposed technical changes in HB 96 will improve the program's functionality, increase utilization, and bring more modestly priced homes to market—particularly in smaller communities and legacy neighborhoods across the state.

## **3.) Strengthening the Single-Family Housing Tax Credit**

The Ohio Legislature's innovative approach to supporting for sale development is to be noted. The Single-Family Housing Tax Credit program is a model that attracted the attention and interest of community partners and housing developers but to improve the effectiveness of this new program, technical changes are needed to attract investors and scale up the development of for sale homes. These investments would be coordinated and targeted and produce homes ready to buy by Ohio's workforce and their families.

## **4.) Safeguard the Ohio Housing Trust Fund**

We support the continuation of the Ohio Housing Trust Fund. This fund has been one of the most impactful sources of State funding support for affordable housing. It assists people in crisis, helps seniors remain in their homes, supports accessibility upgrades, helps first-time buyers succeed and fills critical gaps in housing development projects for Ohio's working families.

The proposed restructuring would undermine the Trust Fund's effectiveness by fragmenting it into 88 separate systems. Noted the need to be responsible to the citizens of Ohio and perform systematic program reviews, we urge the legislature to maintain the current structure and adopt **Amendment SC 136\_1326**. This amendment would preserve statewide coordination while establishing a study committee to explore the fund's effectiveness and potential future enhancements.



**homeport**

There is not one tool that is needed to solve our State's housing challenge. I appreciate the multifaceted approach that the legislature has taken so far and encourage the continuation of these programs and efforts. Housing is foundational to individual and family success, but it is also the key to our growth as a State. Investing in the housing we have today and building the housing we need for the future will solidify Ohio's position as a leader in economic growth and prosperity for all Ohioans.

**Leah F. Evans**  
**President and CEO**