

Testimony for the Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Date: May 27, 2025
Subject: Appalachian Region Talent Attraction Grant Fund
Submitted by: MakeMyMove

Introduction:

Good morning, Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Mike Rutz, and I am the **Executive Vice President and Co-Founder of MakeMyMove**. I am here today to present testimony regarding the creation of a Regional Talent Attraction Grant and the appropriation of funds to support this vital initiative. I appreciate the opportunity to address the Committee on this important matter that directly impacts the economic future of communities within Ohio's Appalachian Region. MakeMyMove is the first and only marketplace connecting move-ready talent with cities and towns actively seeking new residents. We believe in Ohio's mission to empower communities to achieve prosperity, and our platform delivers new residents at scale, measures return on investment, and achieves demonstrable results for both the state and the communities we serve.

Currently, many Ohio communities struggle to attract new residents, hindering their economic growth. This grant program will provide seed money for communities within the Appalachian Region to launch their own targeted talent recruitment programs, incentivizing local involvement and ownership. This approach allows the state to direct relocation activity to specific regions, including those that may not traditionally compete for economic development projects. Notably, in the state of Indiana, 53% of our movers relocated to communities with declining populations, demonstrating the potential for this program to revitalize underserved areas.

The Regional Grant Framework proposes the following:

- A total state investment of \$1,500,000 to fund community-led talent recruitment initiatives.
- A matching grant structure where communities contribute 20% of the program cost, with the state providing the remaining 80%, up to a maximum grant of \$250,000 per community. In-kind donations can be used towards the community match.
- Grant funds can be utilized for incentives, programming, marketing, and the administration of new resident recruitment programs.
- Each grant will have specific targets for the number of new households to be relocated and eligibility requirements for these new residents, such as income level and current residence outside of Ohio.
- Disbursement will be performance-based: 50% of the grant will be paid upfront, with the remaining 50% released upon the community achieving half of its new household target.

This performance-based structure ensures accountability and maximizes the impact of state investment. It also encourages communities to actively participate in the recruitment process, fostering a stronger sense of ownership and commitment to the program's success.

Benefits of the Community Grant:

- Empowers Local Communities: Provides the necessary financial resources for communities to design and implement their own targeted recruitment programs.
- Incentivizes Local Investment: The matching grant structure encourages local "skin in the game," ensuring community buy-in and commitment.
- Enables Broad Participation: enables relocation efforts to regions that may not typically attract economic development projects, fostering balanced growth across the state.
- Performance-Based Accountability: Funds are disbursed based on achieving pre-determined milestones, ensuring responsible use of taxpayer dollars.

Projected Impact (Pro Forma):

Based on our projections, a \$1,500,000 state investment, coupled with \$375,000 in community investment, will result in:

- 100 new households relocating to Appalachian Ohio Region from outside Ohio.
- 230 new Ohioans.
- An average household income of \$100,000 for new residents.
- An estimated 10-year total new economic impact of \$60,387,099.
- \$2,061,218 in new state income tax revenue.
- \$6,105,691 in total new state and local tax revenue.

This translates to a state investment of \$15,000 per new household – a highly effective use of public funds considering the long-term economic benefits.

In conclusion, the Regional Talent Attraction Grant framework represents a strategic investment in the future of Ohio's Appalachian communities. It empowers local leaders, incentivizes growth, and generates substantial returns for the state. We believe this program will be instrumental in attracting new talent, boosting local economies, and strengthening the overall prosperity of Ohio. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may