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State Senator

14<sup>th</sup> District



**Sponsor Testimony**

Senate Bill 88

Senate General Government Committee

February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the Senate General Government Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 88, the Ohio Property Protection Act.

This legislation is a reintroduction and reworking of SB 226 from the previous General Assembly, building on our previous accomplishments passed in the last main operating budget. Under current law, Ohio's farmland is protected from being purchased by foreign adversaries. However, there was unfortunately a second part to this amendment which was vetoed by the Governor; the part that prohibited these foreign adversaries from purchasing any type of land within 25 miles of a military installation.

Senate Bill 88 will reinstate this provision as well as expand the prohibition on land purchasing by foreign adversaries to include any area within 25 miles of critical infrastructure. That includes electric substations, water treatment facilities, natural gas pipelines, dams, telecommunications or broadband infrastructure, railroads, and more. This would effectively blanket the entirety of the State of Ohio.

Furthermore, since we know that adversaries of the United States will take advantage of every loophole to undermine our nation's interests, this bill also expands prohibited parties to include not just foreign adversaries and their governments, but also businesses headquartered

in those counties, citizens of foreign adversaries, as well as suspicious shell companies and fiduciaries.

Under current law, as passed in last year's operating budget, the Secretary of State is required to report potential violations of land purchasing restrictions to the Ohio Attorney General. This bill modifies that provision by moving the reporting process to county auditors, who have authority over the conveyance of property. County auditors must require an affirmation from both the potential buyer and seller of land whether they are subject to the land purchasing restrictions laid out in this section. If the auditor suspects that either the buyer or seller of land is restricted from owning that land, he or she must refer the case to the county sheriff for investigation. The sheriff, upon finding that a violation has occurred, must refer the violation to the county prosecutor for legal action.

There are many similarities between this bill and House Bill 1, joint sponsored by Representatives King and Klopfenstein. However, my legislation takes a hardline stance against foreign adversaries and solves the question of land already own by such countries. If passed, this bill calls for the full divestment of all rights, titles, and interest in protected property within two years of its effective date. These lands then can justly return to the ownership of Ohioans our other businesses who wish to do right by the United States.

I introduced this bill because I strongly believe that Ohio's land should not be for sale to those who seek to destroy the American way of life. The People's Republic of China – Communist China – has not hidden the fact that their goal is not just to outcompete and outperform the United States; it is to eventually rule the world.

According to a 2021 U.S. Department of Agriculture report, Chinese firms and investors owned 384,000 acres of land in the United States<sup>1</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.fsa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021\\_afida\\_annual\\_report\\_through\\_12\\_31\\_2021.pdf](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021_afida_annual_report_through_12_31_2021.pdf)

and they will not stop there. Fufeng USA, a Chinese manufacturer, recently attempted to purchase land and build a facility 20 minutes from Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota. When the Grand Forks City Council cancelled the project – due to security concerns – Fufeng turned its attention to Ohio, whereas of last year, they were seeking land for development.

This cannot be allowed to continue. Should enemies of our country be permitted to purchase land next to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, for example? Our land is currently up for grabs by those who want to cause us harm, endangering our national secrets. China is the most clear and present danger at this moment in time, but this legislation would protect against these threats from any adversarial nation (Iran, North Korea, Russia, and so on) along with terrorist groups, cartels, and more.

SB 226 from the previous GA received wide bi-partisan support, passing unanimously from committee and by a 30-1 vote on the Senate Floor. I hope to see similar success with this legislation.

Thank you again for your time and attention. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.