

Testimony Against Senate Bill 88

Submitted by: Shutaro Sekito

Testifying as Opponent

May 23, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear and members of the Senate General Government Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify against Senate Bill 88. My name is Shutaro Sekito. I am a proud Ohioan, a naturalized U.S. citizen, and a father of two young children. I was born in Japan, but I chose this country—and this state—as my home because I believe in its values of fairness, opportunity, and justice.

That’s why I am here to express my deep concern and opposition to Senate Bill 88.

This bill brings back painful echoes of a dark chapter in American history. During World War II, over 120,000 Japanese Americans—two-thirds of them U.S. born citizens—were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in internment camps. These individuals were loyal Americans, yet they were treated as threats simply because of their ancestry. In 1988, the U.S. government formally apologized, calling it what it was: “race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.”

Senate Bill 88 risks repeating those mistakes.

While I understand and respect the need to protect our national security, this bill casts too wide a net. It would prohibit legal permanent residents and visa holders—people who live, work, and contribute to our communities—from owning single-family homes across the entire state. Even more troubling, it would force some to sell their homes within two years. These are not foreign agents. These are our neighbors, our coworkers, our friends.

My wife is one of them. She leads a team of brilliant data scientists at a Fortune 500 company here in Ohio. Her work helps protect and serve customers across the country. Many of her colleagues—people I’ve come to know and admire—would be directly impacted by this bill. They are not threats. They are assets to our state.

As a father, I worry deeply about the message this bill sends to my children. They are both under three years old, and I want them to grow up in a community that values diversity, not one that fears it. If this bill passes, it could encourage discrimination against families like mine—families who look different, but who love this country just the same.

I also fear for the future of our local immigrant communities. The Chinese community, in particular, has enriched our neighborhoods with culture, cuisine, and language. If this bill drives them away, we all lose. My children may grow up without access to Chinese language schools, grocery stores, or restaurants that connect them to their heritage. They may grow up questioning whether they truly belong.

This bill may not intend to be discriminatory, but its impact will be. And that impact will be felt not just by foreign nationals, but by American citizens—by families like mine.

I respectfully urge this committee to vote **NO** on Senate Bill 88. Let us protect our state without sacrificing the values that make it strong.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shutaro Sekito