

Testimony Opposing Senate Bill 88

May 25th, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chairman Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the Senate General Government Committee:

I hope this message finds you well. I want to express my gratitude for the opportunity to testify against Senate Bill 88 (SB88).

It's a beautiful Ohio summer again. In the early morning, birdsong can be heard from the large tree in my front yard, and the peonies in the garden are blooming. A small brown bunny with a white tail is looking for food in the lawn, undisturbed by the world around it. By afternoon, a chipmunk and the squirrels in my backyard come out, including a beautiful, snowy white squirrel. It makes me worry, as it's an easy target for predators. Birds also make their way into my backyard—a few gray pigeons, orange robins, and even a bright blue one, though my favorite is the red cardinal. For some reason, I haven't seen sparrows or hummingbirds this year. As evening falls, it's the time for the children of our new neighbors to play. I can hear their laughter from my kitchen as they run around with their puppy past my back door.

This is the home I love. Seventeen years ago, we bought it after moving from Texas to Ohio. It was a pivotal year in my life. I was on an H4 visa and received my admission letter to Wright State University's graduate school. Additionally, I was pregnant. To avoid disturbing others in an apartment and to provide a better living environment for my unborn baby, we drained our savings to put a 10% down payment on this home, which remains the only property we have ever owned.

Several months later, my son was born, who is now a high school junior. Hereafter, I earned my master's degree and transitioned from a stay-at-home mother to a data analyst. We've worked extremely hard to contribute to Ohio's economy and the growth of the Dayton community. I am a proud U.S. citizen now. As a legal immigrant, I've lived out my American Dream step by step. Every day, my heart is filled with gratitude for the opportunities I have been given in this country.

My story is not unique. Like many legal immigrants, I came to the United States embracing its values and working toward my version of the American Dream. For us, owning a home is more than a goal—it's a way to build a life and belong. Ohio is not just where we live; it is our home. We work hard, contribute to our communities, and help grow the state's economy and innovation.

As a U.S. citizen and Ohio resident, I fully support efforts to protect our national security. However, I respectfully urge you to reconsider the implications of SB88.

First, the provision requiring certain immigrants to sell their homes within two years is not only deeply unjust and traumatic but also violates constitutional protections of private property rights guaranteed by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution. Such a violation

undermines fundamental principles of due process and individual liberty. Furthermore, the psychological impact on children, who may face bullying, fear, emotional distress, and feelings of instability and unwelcome due to being forced from their homes, cannot be overstated. Forcing law-abiding families into such turmoil contradicts the American ideals of fairness, opportunity, and inclusion.

Second, the bill would likely drive away foreign businesses, causing significant job losses for Ohio residents. It would also deter future investment. These enterprises help fuel economic growth, generate tax revenue, and create valuable employment opportunities. According to the American Immigration Council, in 2022, immigrants in Ohio paid over \$6 billion in taxes and held more than \$18 billion in spending power. SB88 risks not only weakening investor confidence but also reducing the state's tax base and disrupting local economies. Therefore, it could severely undermine Ohio's long-term prosperity.

Moreover, SB88 would discourage immigrants from staying in Ohio, forcing many to leave the state. SB88 would cause legal immigrants who have chosen this country, embraced its values, and made meaningful contributions to their communities to be unfairly penalized solely due to actions taken by foreign governments. We risk losing talented workers and beloved local businesses, such as authentic Chinese restaurants that enrich our neighborhoods.

Furthermore, SB88 risks unintentionally fostering discrimination, particularly against Asian Americans. As an Asian immigrant, I am deeply worried that this bill could fuel mistrust and division at a time when unity and inclusion are more important than ever.

Last but not least, it's worth noting that the previous federal government established a regulation to scrutinize property purchases within a 100-mile radius of military installations, which is an effective and appropriate measure to safeguard national security. In contrast, broadly targeting immigrant communities is neither necessary nor justified. It constitutes a discriminatory practice that does little to advance national interests and instead undermines the fabric of our diverse and inclusive society.

In closing, I respectfully urge the committee to carefully consider these concerns and drop SB88 in its entirety. The bill threatens Ohio's economic future and undermines the rights and dignity of legal immigrants who are an essential part of our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ying Chen