

Testimony Against State Bill 88
Submitted by: Ming S. Li
Testify as Opponent

May 27, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong opposition to Senate Bill 88. I also want to extend my sincere appreciation for your service to the more than 11 million residents of the Buckeye State.

My name is Ming Li, and I am a proud, lawful resident of Toledo. I was born and raised in a very poor family in rural China, where hunger was a constant part of my early childhood life. My most vivid childhood memory is of being hungry. The fear of starving to death, as happened to some of my childhood friends, has been the most common and scarring dream in my whole life.

I was fortunate to be admitted to college in a year when the national college acceptance rate in China was just 3.2%. That opportunity changed my life. I later earned a Ph.D. in the United States and chose to become a university professor because education gave me a path out of poverty—and I want to help other children from disadvantaged backgrounds find the same opportunity.

I have been a professor in Ohio for nearly two decades. Though I have lived in many places, Ohio is where I truly found a sense of belonging. It is my home—the place I love. And that is why I am here today.

We are gathered to discuss an issue of great consequence: how to ensure Ohio remains a safe, inclusive, and thriving state—not only for today but for generations to come. We can all agree that *national security is important. Protecting our communities from criminals and bad actors is a legitimate concern.* But we must be crystal clear about who those bad actors are. Are they really the hardworking, law-abiding immigrants who invest in Ohio, raise families here, and build up our communities?

Senate Bill 88 does not make us safer. It does not target criminals or terrorists. Instead, it broadly and unfairly penalizes tens of thousands—if not hundreds of thousands—*of lawful immigrants based solely on their nationality or country of origin.* This is not sound policy, but a disguised form of racism. And it is COMPLETELY WRONG.

Legislation should be grounded in facts, not fear or fiction. Unfortunately, SB 88 is based on assumptions, not facts. One particularly troubling claim from the bill reads:

“Our land is currently up for grabs by those who want to cause us harm, endangering our national secrets.”

Is there any credible evidence that homeowners are buying properties with the intent to harm our state or country? Has anyone ever heard of a family spending their life-long earnings and

purchasing a house just to commit crimes? Let's be honest: buying a home is one of the most significant and hopeful investments a person can make. It represents *stability, belonging, and a stake in the community*. For many, it is the embodiment of the American dream.

To suggest that a person's national origin makes their homeownership *suspicious* is not only *inaccurate* but also *discriminatory*.

Yes, criminals exist. But they come from all backgrounds, nationalities, and walks of life. Crime is committed by individuals—not by entire communities. Take, for example, one of the most notorious cases in Columbus: *the 2023 indictment of Rebecca Auburn*. Her actions, horrific as they were, do not reflect the character of every person living in Columbus. Why, then, should Chinese Americans or any other group be treated as suspects based on where they come from?

The implication of this bill is deeply disturbing. It suggests that legal immigrant homeowners are potential enemies of the state. That suggestion is not backed by facts or data. What it does resemble, however, is racial profiling—dressed in the language of security.

Now let's consider some real, verifiable facts:

- Ohio is home to over 55,000 Chinese Americans (as of 2020 census), many of whom work in STEM, education, healthcare, and business.
- More than 1,500 Chinese American-owned businesses contribute tens of millions annually to our local economies through jobs, taxes, and commerce.
- Thousands of Chinese students and faculty enrich Ohio universities—including over 4,000 international Chinese students at The Ohio State University alone.
- Chinese American researchers lead groundbreaking work in medicine, engineering, and science—often on federally funded projects.
- Chinese American business networks help facilitate over \$3 billion in trade between Ohio and China each year.
- And Chinese Americans continue to serve on nonprofit boards, lead civic efforts, and promote inclusive economic development statewide.

These are NOT threats. These are NOT criminals. These are contributions. These are loving neighbors. These are loyal Ohioans.

In summary, SB 88 is a sweeping, harmful, and likely unconstitutional measure with far-reaching economic, legal, and human consequences. It undermines civil liberties, weakens Ohio's competitiveness, and inflicts real harm on families like mine—families who have given our best to this state we call home.

Let's stand as one, strong and true, to make Ohio shine in all we do.

Let's keep our people safe and sound, with justice and fairness all around.

Please don't take away what folks have earned, but let's build a state where trust is learned.

Let's choose what's right, not what divides, so future kids can beam with pride.

Let's break the chains of hate and fear and build a world that's kind and clear.

For all these reasons, I urge ALL committee members to vote **NO** on Senate Bill 88 if you do NOT want to be remembered as a racist.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Ming S. Li

Resident of Toledo, Ohio