

Open Letter Opposing HB1 and SB88: In Defense of Equal Protection and Ohio's Future

To the Honorable Members of the Ohio General Assembly:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our united and unequivocal opposition to House Bill 1 (HB1) and Senate Bill 88 (SB88), legislation that would restrict the rights of individuals from China and other countries to purchase or own property in the state of Ohio.

Though proponents claim these bills are necessary for national security, their language and intent disproportionately target immigrants of Chinese, Russian, Iranian, Cuban, Venezuela, and North Korean origin, including permanent residents, many of whom have lived, worked, studied, and contributed to Ohio for decades. These bills risk reviving the long and shameful legacy of Alien Land Laws, which were used in the early 20th century to deny property rights to Asian immigrants solely based on their race and country of origin.

We oppose HB1 and SB88 on the following grounds:

1. They violate constitutional protections. The bills likely contravene the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the Supremacy Clause, which prohibits states from enacting laws that conflict with federal immigration and foreign policy. Barring individuals from owning property based on their nationality or immigration status undermines the very foundation of American constitutional democracy.
2. They violate the Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act of 1968, a cornerstone of civil rights legislation, prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, or financing of housing based on national origin, race, or ethnicity. HB1 and SB88 open the door to discrimination not only against foreign nationals but also against U.S. citizens and lawful residents of Asian descents and immigrants from other countries. Such legislation risks encouraging housing providers and financial institutions to engage in profiling and exclusion—undermining decades of progress toward fair and equal access to housing.
3. They promote racial profiling and xenophobia. By singling out individuals based on national origin, these bills inflame racialized suspicion and encourage discrimination—not just against foreign nationals, but also against American citizens and permanent residents of Asian and immigrant backgrounds.
4. They harm Ohio's economy and global reputation. International students, researchers, entrepreneurs, and workers contribute billions of dollars to Ohio's institutions and industries. These bills send the wrong message to global talent and foreign investors who see Ohio as a welcoming place to study, build, and innovate.

5. They erode social cohesion and public trust. In times of division, scapegoating immigrants and communities of color distracts from real policy challenges. These bills fracture our communities and compromise the values of fairness, inclusion, and opportunity that Ohioans hold dear.

We urge lawmakers to reject HB1 and SB88 in their entirety. These bills do not reflect the spirit or interests of Ohio. Instead, we call for policies that promote security through inclusion, economic growth through global engagement, and justice through equal protection under the law.

We stand in solidarity with all communities targeted by these measures and are committed to building a more just and united Ohio. Let us not repeat the mistakes of the past.

Sincerely,

Birong Li