

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 88
Peizhou Qi, Columbus, Ohio

Honorable members of the committee,

My name is Peizhou Qi, a first-generation immigrant from China who came to the United States over a decade ago to pursue the American Dream. I earned my master's degree from Carnegie Mellon University and have proudly called Columbus, Ohio, home since 2014, working for one of Ohio's largest employers, Chase. Here, I met my wife, a Taiwanese immigrant, and together we built a life—marrying in 2021, raising our two-year-old son, James, a U.S. citizen born in Columbus, and becoming homeowners. In 2023, my wife and I became permanent residents, believing we had realized the promise of America—a nation built on fairness, opportunity, and hope.

But Senate Bill 88 threatens to unravel everything we've worked so hard to achieve. This bill doesn't just target land ownership; it targets people like me, judging us not by our character or contributions but by the country of our birth. It tells my family—my son, an American citizen—that our place in this nation is less secure because of where I was born. Is this the America we cherish, one that inspired me as a middle schooler in China, reciting Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of a nation where people are judged "by the content of their character"? More than half a century later, SB88 risks betraying that vision.

My wife and I came to this country because we love it and want to contribute to its greatness. As a Chinese immigrant, I feel the weight of suspicion cast on our community, despite having no ties to foreign governments. SB88 unfairly paints entire groups as threats based on nationality alone, ignoring who we are as individuals.

This bill revives the dark legacy of Alien Land Laws, which courts have long ruled unconstitutional for discriminating against Asian, Muslim, and immigrant communities. By restricting land ownership based on birth citizenship, SB88 fosters racial profiling, discourages immigrant contributions to Ohio's economy, and risks violating the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. It assumes people like me, who have no ties to foreign governments, are threats simply because of where we were born. This is not only unjust—it's un-American.

We support robust security measures to protect against foreign adversaries, but a blanket ban based on nationality is lazy and dangerous. It punishes individuals for the actions of governments they don't control—governments often not elected by their people. It tells immigrants like me that no matter how much we contribute, we'll always be outsiders.

I urge you to reject Senate Bill 88. Let Ohio remain a state that welcomes all who work hard, love this country, and build lives here. Protect the American Dream for my son, for my family, and for countless others who call Ohio home. Thank you for your time and consideration.

With respect,
Peizhou Qi