

**Ohio Senate Government Oversight & Reform Committee
Public Budget Hearing Testimony, Am. Sub. H. B. No. 96
May 14, 2025**

Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Senate Government Oversight & Reform Committee:

On behalf of The Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority (The Port), thank you for the opportunity to express our support for continued investment in housing and economic development programs in the Fiscal Year 2026-27 State Operating Budget. These tools are critical to stabilizing neighborhoods, revitalizing long-neglected commercial and industrial corridors, and driving inclusive growth throughout Ohio.

The Port is a mission-driven public agency focused on accelerating economic development in Hamilton County. Our work is guided by the belief that real estate should work for everyone. Since 2012, The Port has improved over 2,000 vacant or abandoned properties; demolished or facilitated the demolition of more than 1,200 blighted residential properties; stabilized and preserved over 238 properties; repositioned 75 acres of industrial land; and issued hundreds of millions in bonds for projects that include housing, corporate headquarters, urban mixed-use sites, parking garages, local government development priorities, and much more. Our work relies heavily on state programs that have been instrumental in helping communities like ours tackle persistent challenges: vacant and abandoned housing, brownfield remediation and demolition needs, aging industrial assets, and the growing impact of institutional investors in our housing market.

We respectfully urge your support for the following provisions in the House-passed version of the budget and broader economic development initiatives for Ohio:

- **Brownfield Remediation Program**: The allocation of \$125MM per year through the General Revenue Fund will allow us to continue redeveloping contaminated sites into job-generating assets. This program has already supported transformational projects in Hamilton County, and continued funding will ensure that sites are safe, productive, and ready for reinvestment.
- **Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Program**: The \$20MM per year investment will help local land banks and municipalities demolish dangerous structures and lay the groundwork for new housing and community infrastructure.
- **Welcome Home Ohio**: This program supports affordable homeownership and aligns with The Port's CARE Homes initiative, which reclaims vacant, blighted homes and transfers them to local families, not institutional investors. Support of this program is essential to build wealth in communities that have experienced decades of disinvestment.
- **Lead Abatement Funding**: We strongly support the restoration and expansion of state funding for lead abatement, including the Lead-Safe Home Fund Program. Exposure to lead is a public health crisis that disproportionately affects children in older housing stock, especially in low-income neighborhoods. Continued investment is essential to safeguard families and reduce long-term health costs.



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- **Building Stabilization and Preservation:** We support state funding that assists communities in protecting and preserving deteriorating structures, particularly those in disinvested neighborhoods. We support state funding that assists communities in protecting and preserving these structures, especially in neighborhoods where private investment alone is not sufficient. Investments in stabilization (such as roof repairs or structural support) that complement our Hamilton County Landbank Home Repair Program can prevent irreversible loss and position properties for future homeownership and complete redevelopment.
- **Support for Catalytic Redevelopment Tools – New Markets Tax Credit, Transformational Mixed-Use Development, and State Incentives:** We urge continued support for financing tools that make large, catalytic redevelopment projects viable in disinvested communities. Programs such as the state New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) and Ohio's Transformation Mixed-Use Development (TMUD) incentive are essential for closing financing gaps on complex mixed-use, mixed-income, or industrial projects that would not otherwise move forward. Where possible, state matching funds or complementary programs can enhance the impact of these tools and ensure broader geographic reach.

These initiatives are already delivering results, and with continued investment, Ohio can build on that success. We know the budget process presents difficult decisions, but we hope you will recognize the urgent need to maintain and grow these targeted programs. With continued investment and thoughtful programmatic improvements, Ohio can build a stronger, more inclusive economy. The Port is committed to being a collaborative partner in that work, and we thank you for your leadership.

Chairman Manchester and members of the Senate Government Oversight & Reform Committee, thank you again for your time and unwavering commitment to Ohio's future.

Sincerely,



Laura N. Brunner

President & CEO

The Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority

