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Columbus Partnership
Proponent Testimony for SB 184
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Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Timken, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Housing Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on SB 184, establishing residential economic development districts. My name is Jeff Polesovsky, and I am the Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for the Columbus Partnership.

The Columbus Partnership is a nonprofit, membership-based leadership organization of 82 chairpersons, chief executive officers, and senior executives from the Region's leading businesses and institutions. Our members include Fortune 500 CEOs, leaders of top universities, and the world's largest private, nonprofit research and development organization. The Partnership is committed to advancing a shared vision of making the Columbus Region the most prosperous in the country.

To fully understand the stakes of this legislation, it's essential to recognize that the Columbus Region is not just growing, it's leading. According to the latest U.S. Census data, our metro area is the fastest-growing in the Midwest and among the top in the nation, expanding at a pace 38% higher than the national average in 2024. This growth outpaces peer cities like Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Cleveland, and places Columbus in the company of high-growth metros such as Raleigh and Nashville.

At the same time, this population growth is being matched, and in many ways accelerated, by a wave of once-in-a-generation investments from some of the most innovative companies in the world. Central Ohio is now home to multibillion-dollar projects from Intel, Anduril, Amgen, and Amazon Web Services, alongside expansions from Honda and other advanced manufacturing and tech leaders. These investments are not just impressive in scale; they are fundamentally reshaping our region's economic trajectory.

This level of growth is a powerful validation of our region's momentum, but it also comes with real challenges. Chief among them is the urgent need to scale our housing supply to meet rising demand and ensure that growth remains sustainable and accessible. SB 184 provides the tools needed to address a critical barrier to continued economic growth: a shortage of housing in our region across all income levels.

Utilizing public-private partnerships, this bill incentivizes both robust housing development and pro-housing development policies through grant funding. Focusing on high-impact areas within twenty miles of a major economic development, local governments will be encouraged to adopt policies that make it faster and easier for housing developments to meet demand near major investment sites. These local policies aim to streamline the permitting process, reduce development costs, and encourage high-density residential construction. These policies may include zoning changes, fee reductions, infrastructure improvements, and support for new, innovative housing construction methods.

Increasing housing development is not just about addressing our current shortage and meeting demand, it is about preparing our region for the future. These policies directly support future business attraction and development. A region with diverse and attainable housing options, across income levels and household types, is better positioned to attract and retain talent, stabilize housing markets, and promote growth. When communities can offer a stable and affordable housing supply, they become more competitive in attracting new employers, supporting workforce retention, and fostering long-term economic growth.

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Timken, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Housing Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding SB 184 and its ability to make Ohio a more prosperous state.