



**Representative Monique Smith**  
16<sup>th</sup> House District

**Sponsor Testimony- House Bill 155**

**House Economic and Workforce Development Committee**

**March 10, 2021**

Chair Edwards, Vice-Chair Powell, Ranking Member Upchurch, and the members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 155. This legislation would establish the Land Reutilization Nuisance Abatement Program, allowing for county land reutilization corporations, otherwise known as county land banks, to access grants for abating nuisance structures on blighted parcels of land.

Over the years, every region of Ohio has struggled with nuisance structures and blighted properties such as abandoned hospitals, factories and a variety of commercial sites. They can be costly to demolish, remodel, and repurpose and, currently, the majority of land bank funding is targeted mostly for residential properties. This leaves many properties sitting vacant, resulting in an unsafe environment, no way to collect property tax revenue, and little appeal to investors to take on demolition and abatement.

The high cost of abating issues on these properties can be one of the biggest deterrents to redevelopment. By providing funding for the abatement of safety and environmental issues, especially at former industrial sites, our state can drive economic development by making land more attractive for redevelopment. If these properties were economically viable to abate without this program, the private sector would have stepped in to do so years ago. The unfortunate reality is that too many of these properties go ignored.

It is important to recognize that when abandoned properties become seriously tax delinquent, the chances of ever collecting those delinquent taxes are virtually nonexistent. This program would allow for sites to be cleared not only of abandoned structures, but also the uncollectable taxes, giving the property new life. By investing in a statewide land reutilization initiative, Ohio can turn abandoned sites into revenue-generating sites and strengthen the surrounding tax base and property values.

My own district will benefit from this program not just through the opportunity to redevelop troubled properties but also through the improvement of the countywide tax base. When blighted properties go ignored in one community, it shifts the tax burden to other communities that must make up the difference. The communities in my district are among those likely to end up carrying a greater tax burden in order to maintain crucial county services, which is an outcome that this program can help to prevent.



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We can and should support economic development across Ohio by giving county land banks the necessary funding to abate and reutilize troubled and blighted properties. Ultimately, we all benefit when abandoned and blighted properties become viable again, are re-developed, and generate tax revenue throughout our state. Our legislature can support this economic development opportunity by following the examples of successful county land bank programs and creating this statewide Land Reutilization Nuisance Abatement Program.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this proposal for a program that we know will help to build a better and brighter future for Ohio. Representative Upchurch and I appreciate the committee's time and are happy to answer any questions.