



**Testimony to the Ohio Senate
Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
on Senate Bill 83**

May 11, 2021

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 83, which would require the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) to conduct a study to determine where brownfield sites are located, among other requirements. The team at Cleveland Neighborhood Progress appreciates Senators Williams and Rulli's leadership on this issue because, at its core, this is about jobs and economic opportunity for Ohioans in every corner of the state.

My name is Tania Menesse, and I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of Cleveland Neighborhood Progress. Our mission is to foster inclusive communities of choice and opportunity, and we do that by assisting with neighborhood-level community development across the city. We work in partnership with organizations like the Greater Cleveland Partnership, the Urban League of Greater Cleveland, and community development corporations to help our neighborhoods stabilize, revitalize, and thrive. From lending to small businesses and coaching neighborhood leaders to making investments that attract private development to disinvested areas, our goal is to strengthen Cleveland – and the state – one neighborhood at a time.

We support Senate Bill 83 because we are not strangers to brownfields remediation and development. Strong neighborhoods rely on an interconnected mix of good housing, access to transportation, a talented workforce, and employment opportunities. In many Cleveland neighborhoods, the space that is available for commercial or industrial development is contaminated by prior use. Whether it was a warehouse or factory, a dry cleaner or gas station, or simply an illegal dumping site, brownfields vary in size and level of contamination.

In this regard, Cleveland's history is not unique: towns and cities across Ohio share this experience with brownfields. Brownfields represent long-closed businesses and employers, and their presence is a reminder that residents today still live with contaminated soil and groundwater. Without a plan and funding to remediate them, brownfields will never be attractive sites for new residential, commercial, or industrial development. This puts Ohio and our neighborhoods at a competitive disadvantage, which is why this issue warrants the state's leadership today.

We support Senate Bill 83 because proactive brownfield reclamation and redevelopment needs should be an essential tool in Ohio's economic development strategy. To get there, we need a centralized inventory and shared understanding of where brownfields are and what we can do with them.

When cleaned up, these sites can bring new jobs and opportunity to the residents who live in these neighborhoods.

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee, thank you again for this opportunity to address the committee in support of this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or your colleagues may have.