



The Honorable Scott Ryan
Chairman, Ohio House Finance Committee
77 S. High St.
13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Ryan:

I write today in support of House Bill 695, which will reinstitute the Rural Industrial Park Loan Fund and appropriate \$25 million to the fund from the Facilities Establishment Fund.

As Executive Director of the Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA), a Local Development District serving 10 Appalachian counties in Eastern Ohio (Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Muskingum and Tuscarawas), I hear frequently from the economic development professionals in the region about a lack of shovel-ready sites and modern industrial buildings.

In 2017, of the 74 site searches conducted by JobsOhio and the Appalachian Partnership for Economic Growth (APEG), our region had sites and building profiles that reached clients less than half the time because we either did not have a site or building that matched the project criteria or because our sites or buildings were filtered out as not being competitive.

Reinstituting the Rural Industrial Park Loan Fund program is a tool that would help our counties mitigate that competitive disadvantage, because when time, risk and cost to acquire property are greater in a community, this can inhibit capital investment and job creation. We don't know what end users we've lost because we didn't have a ready site.

Eastern Ohio is on the cusp of economic transformation with the potential ethane cracker plant in Belmont County and subsequent downstream businesses associated with the petrochemical and plastics industries and our existing advantages of river, rail and roadway. An additional tool to develop ready sites would strengthen our communities' ability to compete.

For these reasons, I support HB695. The Rural Industrial Park Loan program would help better position our region to attract new businesses and to help existing businesses grow.

Sincerely,

OHIO MID-EASTERN GOVERNMENTS ASSOCIATION

Jeannette M. Wierzbicki, P.E.

Executive Director