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SB 356 Sponsor Testimony
Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee
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Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Maharath and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee. Thank you for allowing me to give testimony on Senate Bill 356 and for allowing Gus Frangos from the Land Bank Association to go into the mechanics of the bill after me today. The purpose of this bill is to modernize land banking in Ohio.

Legislation in 2008 first authorized the formation of a land bank for Cuyahoga County. Two years later, the law was amended to allow counties with populations of at least 60,000 to form a land bank. 2015 legislation marked the removal of population requirements, making all counties eligible to form county land banks. Today, 57 counties have established land banks across Ohio. Since 2010 these land banks addressed the harmful effects of abandoned properties and have shown a positive economic impact on their communities.

The overall goal of a land bank is to acquire blighted or abandoned properties and repurpose them for productive use, making them once again, taxable properties. Their specific functions include: (1) acquiring and consolidating vacant parcels through purchases, donations or intergovernmental transfer from public foreclosure holdings, (2) clearing title to land and preparing parcels for transfer to a third party for redevelopment or reuse and (3) prioritizing land for disposition or reuse, selling land for redevelopment to a third party.

Examples of land bank projects might include rehabbing houses for disabled veterans and sober living facilities, developing properties for residential living and renting or converting vacant lots into community gardens, small parks and parking for businesses.

For 10 years, land banks throughout the state have successfully bought, raised and rehabbed abandoned homes and properties. This legislation helps to modernize the acquisition process by providing consistency and clarification to the existing land banking and tax foreclosure laws. SB 356 accomplishes the following:

- Allows land banks across the state to effectively and efficiently operate and keep pace with technology and industry
- Maintains constitutional rights of landowners and lien holders
- Streamlines service model to better revitalize and rehab communities
- Provides a standard model for land banks across the state, while also allowing for land banks to serve the unique needs of the communities in which they operate

Senate Bill 356 is a result of background work with the Ohio Land Bank Association on necessary changes to current land bank and tax foreclosure laws to maintain its effectiveness.

Thank you, Chairman Manning, for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony today on SB 356. I welcome any questions from the committee.