



**Dan Acton**  
**HB 167 Proponent Testimony**  
**House Finance Committee**  
**March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chairman Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley and members of the committee, my name is Dan Acton and I am the Government Affairs Director of the Ohio Real Estate Investors Association (OREIA). OREIA represents 13 local associations with over 3,000 members across Ohio. My background includes more than 30 years in the property management and ownership industry. I am providing a brief statement of support on House Bill 167, which would appropriate \$465 million in FY 2021 to the Development Services Agency to fund an emergency rental and utility assistance program in accordance with the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act. OREIA appreciates the effort of Chairman Oelslager to bring this issue to our attention and for the consideration to you and your colleagues.

Aside from the serious health effects the COVID-19 pandemic brought onto Ohioans, the economic fallout suffered through lost jobs and wages has impacted millions and left them unable to pay rent and utility bills. Residents, through no fault of their own, were forced out of their jobs and left with the difficult decision on how to spend their reduced income provided through unemployment compensation, often a fraction of their normal wages. Ohioans living on low and fixed incomes, many of whom are renters, were among those hardest hit when government mandated shutdowns of businesses began almost a year ago. However, low income renters are not alone in facing difficulty paying rent, which is why OREIA believes there should not be any artificial income thresholds associated with receiving rent and utility assistance.

Residents are not only unable to cover their rent and utility bills, but without receiving rent payments, housing providers were forced into an extremely difficult position. Property owners are still required to uphold their financial obligations in the form of insurance, mortgages, maintenance, and other associated costs. When residents are unable to pay their bills, the effect is passed on to investors. Under Ohio law, the property owner is ultimately responsible for any unpaid water and sewer bills, regardless of the resident's inability to pay.

The funding allocated by HB 167 is critical to protecting the ability of residents to pay their rent and utility bills, and for housing providers to continue providing safe and affordable housing to our residents. OREIA supports HB 167 and the much needed relief it provides renters and residents across the state. We appreciate the thoughtful and timely consideration from both the state and federal levels to help Ohioans struggling to cover rent under this devastating pandemic.

We urge quick passage of this important legislation.