



## Office of Representative Willis E. Blackshear Jr.

39<sup>th</sup> House District

Sponsor Testimony – State and Local Government Committee

Thank you, Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairman John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee for giving me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 566.

Since the housing crisis of 2008, abandoned homes and vacant properties have become a serious issue across the country, especially in many Ohio communities. The plethora of abandoned and vacant homes has led to plummeting home values and a depreciation in the quality of life in countless communities

Abandoned and vacant properties are dangerous for all members of our communities. Many of the 11,000 vacant homes across the city of Dayton, as well as, other cities in Ohio and across the nation, sit in clusters. These clusters often become a hotbed for criminal activity. According to a study from Case Western, there is a connection between vacant properties and an increase in aggravated assaults and violent crime.<sup>1</sup> Vacant properties are also extremely harmful to our economy. According to the Urban Institute, a study in Toledo found that vacant properties led to \$2.7 million in lost tax revenue and an additional \$2.7 million lost because of the negative effects of vacancy on surrounding property values. Moreover, Toledo spent \$6,000 per building

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<sup>1</sup> [https://case.edu/socialwork/sites/case.edu.socialwork/files/2018-10/vacant\\_distressed\\_props\\_comm\\_health\\_safety.pdf](https://case.edu/socialwork/sites/case.edu.socialwork/files/2018-10/vacant_distressed_props_comm_health_safety.pdf)

to demolish 285 buildings in 2011.<sup>2</sup> They lead to lower property taxes, as well as slow economic and community growth. Clearly, this is an issue that must be combatted to build a strong and effective economy in our state and to ensure that all Ohioans live in safety and without fear. Additionally, older abandoned homes are dangerous by themselves. Rundown properties may be structurally dangerous. People, including children, may trespass on these properties and injure themselves. Especially in older homes, past building materials like lead and asbestos may affect the surrounding community.

Perhaps more important than anything else is that these vacant, rundown buildings have no contact information for the landowner. There is no way to get in touch with owners regarding their property to alleviate the issues caused by the property. Without any method of contact, buildings will continue to crumble and properties will continue to degrade, which is detrimental to the economic and social health of our neighborhoods.

With the introduction of HB 566, we are seeking to remedy this communication problem by requiring owners of vacant property to file updated contact information with the county auditor's office. This act will ensure that vacant properties are accessible to manage, maintain, and sell in neighborhoods all over the state of Ohio. HB 566 requires vacant property owners or owner's agent to report updated contact information with the county auditor's office within 60 days of a change in contact information (address, phone number, etc). This measure would be required in counties with a population of over 200,000 people, with counties under 200,000 people allowed to opt-in to this reporting requirement. This ensures that counties which are home to most of the states' abandoned homes receive the much-needed help that is required. Two major metropolitan areas in the state, Cleveland, and Cincinnati, are in the top 30 cities in the

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/100464/pfs\\_and\\_blighted\\_properties\\_0.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/100464/pfs_and_blighted_properties_0.pdf)

country regarding housing vacancy rates. If a vacant property owner fails to update their information within 60 days, they will be assessed a penalty of \$500 or 1% of the assessed value of the land. This bill will boost economic development in places all around the Buckeye State

In addressing this issue, we are creating communities where Ohioans can thrive. Removing or maintaining these properties will ensure that citizens across the state can live, work, and raise a family in safety and security. Instead of wasting taxpayer money, we must be proactive in coming up with solutions that benefit all Ohioans and their communities. We must fight to make Ohio more beautiful, prosperous, and safe, and the Neighborhood Protection Act does just that.