

**Before the Ohio House Civil Justice Committee
Opponent Testimony on House Bill 64
May 23, 2023**

Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Galonski and members of the Ohio House Civil Justice Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 64, which amends aspects of Ohio's eminent domain laws. I am writing this testimony today on behalf of The Columbus Partnership, which is a non-profit, membership-based leadership organization of 80 chairpersons, chief executive officers and senior executives from the Region's leading businesses and institutions. Our members include 15 Fortune 1000 CEOs, as well as the leaders of the nation's largest university and world's largest research and development organization.

The Columbus Partnership's primary focus is to provide a long-term vision for achieving greater economic prosperity and position Columbus to be one of the strongest environments to attract businesses and investment in the world. Since its formation, the Partnership and our economic development team at One Columbus has worked with both government and businesses to spur economic development. However, the changes made to Ohio's eminent domain law as enumerated in H.B. 64 could significantly hinder the future economic development potential not just for the Columbus Region, but for the entire State of Ohio. If this bill is enacted, Ohio would be faced with a permanent competitive disadvantage, where potential opportunities for the expansion of small businesses, manufacturers, and other job creating projects would be beset with untenable negotiation and settlement tactics.

H.B. 64 would force project timelines to potentially be drawn out over years due to litigation proceedings. We understand and take the importance of property rights seriously, but this bill creates unnecessary legal fees and proceedings for potential projects due to the increase in burden of evidence that would be required. Further, this bill changes the definition of "public use" such that property takings cannot be primarily used for recreational trails. This has the potential to harm communities that are connected by bike and walking trails which rely on this important public infrastructure to promote community interconnection and economic interaction.

Make no mistake, the changes made to Ohio's eminent domain law in House Bill 64 will hurt Ohio's economic development efforts, making it more challenging and more expensive for public agencies to purchase land for public use and development. We believe these changes will negatively impact Ohio's ability to attract new development, effectively harming our region's businesses, communities, and families.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this issue and for the opportunity to testify on this important bill.



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