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Parts of Geauga, Portage and
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Committees

Vice Chair - Armed Services and
Veterans Affairs
Homeland Security
Public Health Policy
Technology and Innovation
Ways and Means

H.B. 480 – Sponsor Testimony

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and esteemed colleagues of the House Criminal Justice Committee – thank you for allowing Rep. Young and me to speak to HB 480.

Ohio already has strong protections for property owners, but it can still be a time-consuming process to remove somebody who is illegally occupying your home or rental property. To quote from our Legislative Service Commission memo on “squatting:”

“Property owners find it most difficult to remove squatters from land that is left vacant or abandoned for an extended period of time.”

“So what is a property owner to do about stubborn squatters? Generally, if a trespasser refuses to leave private property, the appropriate course of action is to obtain a writ of execution through a Forcible Entry and Detainer action. Such an action is fairly straight forward and highly effective, but many property owners argue that it is overly burdensome as applied to expelling squatters who are not currently, and have never been proper tenants.”

It is also important to note, according to LSC, that while trespassing is illegal, property owners cannot conduct a citizens’ arrest, cannot use force against a trespasser except in self-defense, and cannot apply castle doctrine to spaces outside of personal residences or vehicles.

Ohio has already taken steps to address this problem, as I just mentioned, but that does not mean we can't make improvements that further respect property owners' rights.

Our bill makes the system for removing these squatters better and more responsive to the needs of property owners in the state while simultaneously offering recourse for those who are wrongfully removed from property.

I urge the committee's support for HB 480, and I look forward to addressing any questions you may have.