



March 27, 2023

Interested Party Testimony

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for allowing us to submit interested party testimony on House Bill 33.

My name is Desmond Maaytah, Executive Director of the Clermont County Land Reutilization (Clermont County Land Bank). Clermont County Land Bank is one of the newest Land Banks in the state and was formed to address vacant and abandoned property and return it to productive use. One of our priorities is to assist our local communities to address legacy commercial and residential blight and post-industrial, environmentally contaminated sites to create shovel-ready properties for future economic and community development.

Recognizing the challenges of addressing brownfield sites and the need to have sites ready for redevelopment throughout the State, the FY22-23 main operating budget established the Brownfield Remediation Fund (BRF) and the Building Demolition and Site Revitalization (BDSR), providing \$350 million to assess and cleanup environmentally contaminated sites and \$150 million to address commercial and residential demolition. We applaud the Legislature for these programs, and the Ohio Department of Development in its administration of these successful programs. It has presented opportunities in nearly every county in the State.

The Brownfield Remediation Fund's \$350 million provided grants to 313 projects in 83 of Ohio's 88 counties. The Demolition Fund's \$150 million will support 3,699 projects in 87 of Ohio's 88 counties. While this is a significant investment, the need remains for grant dollars to remediate and redevelop these blighted brownfields into productive use.

The as-introduced budget does not include funding for the Brownfield Remediation Program or the Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Program. We are here today to encourage the committee to provide an additional \$350 million and \$150 million respectively to these programs in the FY24-25 budget.

The initial investment of \$350 million granted 188 brownfield cleanup grants, which is the final step in the remediation process to address environmental contamination and allow these brownfields to become new industrial and commercial sites, new housing or shovel-ready land.

In addition, 125 projects were granted assessment dollars. Assessment work is an important step in the remedial process, but it is only the first step to determine the contamination present on the site and the remedial action required to address such contamination. Without additional funding, these 125 projects will likely remain contaminated, and unable to move to a shovel-ready state. Assessment dollars were awarded to three sites in Clermont County. Without additional dollars to address these large scale “dumps” we fear they will remain as they are without the ability for these sites to be redeveloped.

Equally as important, the Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Program’s \$150 million investment has allowed for communities to address decades long blight remediation needs. This program has been the first meaningful investment into commercial demolition and this is evident by the 87 counties awarded these funds. This program allowed for an obvious impact in Ohio’s communities, but more investment is needed to continue to create opportunities for future development. Our Land Bank was awarded funds to demolish residential and/or commercial sites. However our need is still great in Clermont County.

A \$500 million investment in the brownfield and demolition grant programs will have a positive impact throughout the state, and the communities that are utilizing these funds. Past research by the Greater Ohio Policy Center shows that for every dollar the state invests, there is a five dollar return in private investment. Ohio’s previous brownfield grant program contributed more than one billion dollars to the state’s GDP during its tenure.

Chair Jones, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Desmond Maaytah
Executive Director