



**House Government Oversight Committee
Gina Wilt, Advocacy Director
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House Bill 499 - Proponent**

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 499. COHHIO is a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to ending homelessness and promoting safe, decent, accessible, and fair housing for all Ohioans. We advocate for those who need affordable housing, those living in affordable housing, and people experiencing homelessness.

We are excited to support House Bill 499 because stable housing is the foundation for the health and well-being of Ohio's families and communities. We appreciate this bi-partisan effort to help cities address the housing affordability crisis by incentivizing policies that create housing opportunities for all people – our aging parents, our brothers and sisters with disabilities, single moms, young men reentering the community from incarceration, line chefs, factory workers, fast food workers, home health care aides, child care workers, entry level police cadets or firefighters.

About 64 percent of Ohioans rent their homes, including the more than 700,000 who spend over half of their household income on rent. Ohio has a shortage of 267,382 affordable rental units available for extremely low-income Ohioans. While much of HB 499 is more targeted toward the low- to middle-income population, this legislation does include some provisions that would benefit lower income tenants and could increase the overall housing supply to help mitigate the steep rent increases that we've seen over the past few years.

Ensuring safe and affordable housing for our families starts with really understanding the landscape of the housing market in your community. That includes knowing who owns the housing, which has become increasingly challenging as large institutional investors have been buying up homes throughout Ohio in recent years. The consolidation of rental housing stock reduces competition, increases rents, and often leaves tenants and city officials unable to hold negligent operators accountable.

We appreciate the inclusion of tenant protections and anti-discrimination enforcement as an eligible use for the proposed housing grants. Strong tenant protections can reduce unnecessary evictions and help tenants get a fresh start and be contributing members of Ohio's economy. Pairing tenant protections with rental registries may also give municipalities the tools that they need to understand overall community challenges so they can make informed decisions on the big picture front, but also so they can hold negligent and absentee landlords accountable. These basic consumer protections

combined with all the other pro-housing development recommendations will help give people the opportunity to participate in the American Dream.

We also support the bill's incentives for cities to update their zoning codes, which too often prevent the development of multi-family affordable housing and require large sprawling single-family homes that are unaffordable to the majority of Ohio's workforce.

This legislation also recognizes the connection between affordable housing and economic development. With several megaprojects in the works that will generate a lot of ancillary economic development including lower-paid service jobs, we appreciate that HB 499 addresses the fact that communities will need a range of affordable housing options. We would welcome further discussion on how JobsOhio and the state's economic development system can help address the need to house Ohio's diverse workforce.

Addressing housing insecurity has been shown to reduce public expenditures in hospitals, schools, child welfare, courts, jails, and prisons. We look forward to working together with you to bring this thoughtful legislation to reality and to expand access to home for all Ohioans.