



**Interested Party testimony submitted to the
Ohio Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources
House Bill 33
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Chair Jones, Ranking Member Troy, and Members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on House Bill 33. My name is Nate Coffman, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio CDC Association (OCDCA), a statewide membership organization of nearly 300 members that are locally-based rural and urban nonprofits that work to rebuild neighborhoods through initiatives such as economic development, affordable housing, financial education and local food access.

I'm here to ask for your continued support of the Main Street Job Recovery Program, which was created in the last budget to create employment opportunities, support small businesses and startups, and increase self-sufficiency among Ohioans—particularly those with low-to-moderate incomes—while working to strengthen and restore local communities.

Under the program, nonprofit organizations apply for grants to address the economic needs of individuals and families through the creation of permanent business development and employment opportunities. This bottom-up approach to economic development focuses on job creation for Ohioans while rebuilding Main Streets by addressing priorities such as blight remediation, vacant properties, housing, and the reentry population. The program was funded at \$500,000 over the last biennium, and I'm excited to share there was a very high level of interest and more worthy applications than funding available from nonprofit organizations across the state.

The Department of Development asked OCDCA to administer the program and work with grantees to track program success based on the number of businesses created and expanded, the number of jobs created, and the amount of funds leveraged as a result of the program, which we did gratis because we believe in this program. We also administer the state's Microbusiness Development Program.

We received 21 compelling applications pitching unique and transformative projects across the state. Collectively, these 21 programs would create or retain over 375 jobs, while leveraging at least \$12 million. For the pilot we were able to fund three projects.

Based in Cleveland, CleveLawn specializes in training the reentry population in full property maintenance, ground maintenance, small-scale residential and commercial renovations and equipment maintenance and repairs. CleveLawn has created three jobs since receiving an award, and recent interviews with these returning citizens found that their employment and training have provided them with a sense of pride, purpose and belonging.

To scale their proven model of cooperative technical assistance, Co-Op Dayton received a grant to launch or expand four co-ops that meet the needs in their community while creating permanent jobs in the process. For example, the project will support TRIBE Doula Collective, a cooperative that seeks to improve birth and early childhood outcomes in the Dayton region for African American and low-income women and families.

Finally, Community Development for All People was awarded funds to create the South End Café. The Café is designed to provide good-paying jobs for low-income individuals from the reentry population and individuals that have been out of the workforce for an extended period of time. The Café opened last month on Parsons Avenue in Columbus, and because of the grant funding this project received, CDAP was able to hire four full time employees with benefits, rather than initially hiring four part time employees.

In total, these projects are expected to create 24 full time jobs, 6 businesses, and leverage more than \$1 million in additional investment.

The as-introduced budget does not include continued funding for this important program, so I ask for your support of an amendment to fund the Main Street Job Recovery Program at \$1 million each fiscal year. Funds would be used to support up to 12 new projects across the state over the biennium.

Nonprofit organizations are uniquely positioned to spur economic development by leveraging public resources to draw additional private investments. The Main Street Job Recovery Program is a powerful tool for Ohio communities to create permanent skilled jobs while strengthening and restoring their communities. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.