

House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development, and Natural Resources
Testimony – Prepared by Tom Mignery – Burgess & Niple, Inc.
March 17, 2023

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 regarding the Ohio's Main Operating Budget for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025.

My name is Tom Mignery, and I am in charge of Burgess & Niple, Inc.'s (B&N's) Brownfield Program. I am a Senior Hydrogeologist and a Certified Professional under Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Voluntary Action Program (VAP). I have worked for B&N for 36 years on Brownfield redevelopment where we provide economic development value to public and private clients. I have personally signed 33 No Further Action (NFA) letters for brownfield redevelopment.

Brownfield Successes Over Past Two Years

So there may be questions on the impact of the previous Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) \$350 million and whether or not to provide additional allocation to address additional brownfield challenges by the presence of brownfields, the FY22-23 main operating budget established the Brownfield Remediation Fund (BRF), providing \$350 million to assess and cleanup these environmentally contaminated sites. We commend the Legislature for the inclusion of this program, and the ODOD in its administration of this successful program.

I have travelled over 1,000,000 miles in my 36-year career across Ohio and visited every County and many of the large, and mid-size cities, villages, and hamlets in Ohio. All I can tell you is that there remains a fairly large sum of brownfields, and while the previous allocation was a significant investment in the assessment and cleanup of brownfields, the need remains for grant dollars to remediate and redevelop these blighted brownfields into productive use.

Addressing the Ongoing Need for Revitalization

Moreover, I have personally visited many of these former industrial sites, service stations, schools, and abandoned sites, the as-introduced budget does not include funding for the BRF. Moreover, I am speaking for the Large Cities such as the 3 C's and Dayton, mid-size cities such as Middletown, Villages such as Crooksville, and hamlets located throughout Morrow County. Therefore, **we are here today to encourage the committee to provide an additional \$350 million to this program in the FY24-25 budget.**

Although you are likely aware of the economic impacts, I want to share with you the impact on the local neighborhoods. Now I've heard from Mayors, City Managers, Village Administrators of the aesthetic or visual impacts a demolition and cleanup of a brownfield can have on the neighborhood Psyche. One is that we the City/Village and the State of Ohio give a damn! There is a palpable sense of pride and that government works for the people, and the impact that the Mayor or leader of a public entity has on listening to the citizens is huge! **A big bonus that I have been a part of is a reduction of potential toxins to protect local neighborhoods adjacent to brownfields, otherwise known as environmental justice areas, where the poor have been dealt a tough poker hand that is difficult to overcome suppressed property values, higher incidences of cancer, and just overcoming the stigma of contamination. I have witnessed this in Sidney (Wagner Ware brownfield), Troy (numerous former service stations), Middletown (Middletown Paperboard Site), and many other sites in Clinton Guernsey and Crawford Counties, and many other sites across Ohio.** There remain additional brownfields to sustain an additional investment of \$350 million, which previously granted 188 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, mixed-use space, or developable land.

Quoting the Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC), however, 125 projects were granted assessment dollars, which merely determine the contamination present on the site, but does not provide cleanup dollars to complete the work. Without additional funding, these 125 projects will likely remain contaminated, and unable to move into productive economic engines.

An additional investment of \$350 million to this program will allow the 125 projects that received an assessment to compete for cleanup dollars to apply for cleanup funds. In addition to these 125 projects, the need for brownfield grant dollars remains. The final round for applications through ODOD opened and closed in less than 3 business days due to limited funding remaining and an overwhelming amount of applications.

GOPC has worked with lawmakers to have a budget amendment drafted to add this funding into the budget. I am here as well today to encourage members of the House Finance Committee to include this in the next budget. **What we do with the approved budget amendment matters to Mr. and Mrs. Magillicutty who live next door to a brownfield!!!**

Conclusion

Chair Jones, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

BURGESS & NIPLE, INC.



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