

Vinton County Commissioners
Development Department

TERRI FETHEROLF
Director

205 South Market Street
McArthur, Ohio 45651
dev.dept@vintonco.com

Phone: 740-596-3529
740-596-0329
Fax: 740-596-3529

House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development, and Natural Resources
Testimony – Prepared by: Vinton County Development Department (VCDD)
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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 regarding the state's Main Operating Budget for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025.

My name is Terri Fetherolf, Director of the Vinton County Development Department (VCDD). I am submitting written testimony on behalf of Vinton County. I work for the Vinton County Commissioners, furthering economic and community development here. Part of our economic development mission is to revitalize and strengthen Vinton County by preserving the current property values through the strategic demolition and remediation of abandoned, blighted and tax delinquent properties. Rehabilitating brownfield properties of potentially significant value but that are otherwise non-productive due to abandonment and returns or recirculates these properties back into productive use through a transparent, public, and community-oriented process.

Recognizing the challenge presented to Ohio 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 Ohio Department of Development in its administration of this successful program.

The Brownfield Remediation Fund's \$350 million provided grants to 313 projects in 83 of Ohio's 88 counties. While this is 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.

The as-introduced budget does not include funding for the Brownfield Remediation Fund, and therefore, **we are writing to encourage the committee to provide an additional \$350 million to this program in the FY24-25 budget.**

The Vinton County Commissioners have two brownfield properties on the list of 125 projects that were granted assessment dollars. Hammond Hardware and Mic-Kel gas station. Without additional funding, our brownfield projects will likely remain contaminated. Adding to the concern, while working on these assessment projects, VCDD identified more brownfields in Vinton County that need assessment and cleanup dollars. Please assist us in the vital role of promoting revitalization, renewal, and community pride.

I am writing to encourage members of the House Finance Committee to include this in the budget. An investment in a brownfield grant program is an economic win for the state, and the communities where remediation occurs. 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. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

