



June 19, 2019

Attn: Ohio House of Representatives

Committee: Economic and Workforce Development

Chairman Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Sobecki, and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today relative to House Bill 252, legislation which I believe is imperative to the continued revitalization of our beloved Rust Belt communities.

My name is Taylor Evans and I am the Founder and President of Rust Belt Recruiting, a Cleveland-based recruiting and staffing firm specializing in skilled trades and professional roles within the manufacturing and construction industries, specifically in the Midwest and Great Lakes regions. Obviously both of these industries have a stake here, between the renewal of industrial sites and the construction work this potentially creates in both demolition and new building. We regularly hear from our clients throughout Northern Ohio that they have plans to grow, not only from a staffing standpoint but also physically. It is imperative that we do all we can to fulfill those goals within the borders of Ohio, rather than losing them regionally, nationally or internationally.

To begin, as I reflect on this bill, my thoughts go towards my mother. She is an incredibly gifted interior designer who has the ability to survey a room, empty or previously decorated, and identify new ways in which she can improve it. I am often left in awe of her ability to envision and forecast something that I could not, regardless of the state that the room is in. Yet I think it is safe to say many of us are this way. We look at something before us and can't possibly see past what it is. We only see its current condition.

As agencies throughout the state of Ohio continue to seek investment and new development in their areas, revitalized parcels of land make it easier to visualize a new beginning. Investment bankers, developers and others of the sort consider opportunities to breathe new life into communities, yet they do not want to be faced with the challenge of clearing a site and then going through the necessary testing to make sure it is safe to build a new structure there. It is a disservice to our communities and their citizens to not be putting our best foot forward towards future growth opportunities by preparing the sites for redevelopment.

Another important angle to bear in mind is *where* these dilapidated buildings are standing. More often than not, real estate is based upon one thing: location, location, location!



However as these mammoth structures fall behind, so follows the surrounding community. We're shackling some of the prime parts of our towns and cities by allowing these relic structures continue to exist unattended.

One less heralded component to this ties into my past - working for two different Convention and Visitors Bureaus, one being Cleveland's own, and the other: Austin, Texas, one of the most notable travel destinations in the country. It is a known fundamental to a CVB's core mission to make sure visitors see the best of the best in their community. Specific to Cleveland, this can be a challenge. The area surrounding our airport was once very industrial and does not accurately represent some of the beautiful or historic aspects offered in our city, to which these visitors are likely headed while in town. With traffic streaming past numerous industrial sites, announcing their decay with broken windows and dilapidated facades, they are symbolic of past declines. In this we are sending the wrong message to people who are giving Cleveland a chance beyond the criticisms that they have likely heard prior to arrival. The same can be said for other small communities throughout Ohio. As Cleveland specifically is approaching hosting two professional all star games, two major NCAA basketball functions, an NFL Draft and numerous other conventions, we need to roll out our best for these visitor, as well as those *unknown* in the future, and make Ohio a destination for them. An irrefutable aspect of the reputation Ohio is seeking to reclaim demands revitalization opportunities both big and small.

While Representative Greenspan focused his Sponsor Testimony on the nefarious behavior which can occur in these structures, it was well stated on News 5 Cleveland's coverage of this bill that these ruins represent a legacy of abandonment. If we want to accelerate putting some new shine on the Rust Belt, all of our communities, no matter the size, must be equipped with the financial resources necessary to make changes. No Ohioan wants to see these hollowed out structures looming around and representing broken periods of the past. Let's get to work in preparing our cities and the Buckeye state for a promising future as we head into the next decade.

Thank you Chairman Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Sobecki, and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, for your time and consideration today.