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Land Bank Legislation Jointly Introduced in the General Assembly

Bi-partisan bills will expand land bank statute to 28 additional counties

COLUMBUS –With the support of key officials and numerous stakeholders throughout Ohio, State Senators Mark Wagoner (R-Toledo) and Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo) and Representatives Peter Ujvagi (D-Toledo) and Roland Winburn (D-Dayton) introduced Senate Bill (SB) 188 and House Bill (HB) 313 respectively that would lower the population threshold to allow more counties to organize a county land bank, providing a powerful tool for local governments to use in addressing the aftermath of the foreclosure pandemic that has swept the state and the growing number of vacant and abandoned properties.

The current land bank statute only applies to Cuyahoga County but this legislation focuses on providing counties of populations greater than 100,000 and those between 78,000 and 81,000 the option of organizing a County Land Reutilization Corporation (CLRC), or county land bank. The bill would also increase the number of members that can sit on the CLRC from the current statutory requirement of five to nine, allowing for more local control and flexibility in designing a board that meets each county's needs.

“Land banks provide an important tool for local governments to use in addressing the growing number of vacant and abandoned properties,” said Lavea Brachman, Co-Director, Greater Ohio & Non-resident Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution. “Greater Ohio has been pressing for changes to the land bank statute to allow more counties to strategically acquire properties, develop creative ways to use those properties, reduce blight, increase property values, support community goals and improve the quality of life for residents.”

The introduction of this bill is especially timely as Ohio continues to weather fallout from the foreclosure crisis. New data released last week by RealtyTrac Inc. shows that one out of every 171 housing units in Ohio is in foreclosure.

The bill also implements one of the key recommendations in a previously released Brookings/Greater Ohio report proposing a series of state policy action items to address Ohio's foreclosure and vacant and abandoned properties crisis. In addition, when Greater Ohio and the Brookings Institution unveiled the draft ***Restoring Prosperity to Ohio*** policy agenda last fall before a crowd of 1,000 Ohio leaders, land bank reform was highlighted as a critically needed tool.

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Greater Ohio (www.greaterohio.org) is the state's "smart growth" organization. We promote – through research, public education and grassroots advocacy – public policy to grow Ohio's economy and improve the state's quality of life through intelligent land use. Toward this end, Greater Ohio works to advance policies and programs that revitalize urban and metropolitan areas, strengthen regional cooperation, and protect Ohio's open space, natural resources and farmland. We are non-partisan, non-profit, and foundation-funded. Greater Ohio's office is located in Columbus, Ohio.