



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

Reducing Barriers to Construction

Interested Party Testimony
Ohio House Local Government Committee
Ohio House Bill 361

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As Prepared for Delivery

Chair King, Vice Chair Kishman, Ranking Member Sims, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding **Ohio House Bill 361**.

My name is Greg R. Lawson. I am a senior research fellow at **The Buckeye Institute**, an independent research and educational institution—a think tank—whose mission is to advance free-market public policy in the states.

Ohio struggles under local regulatory building rules that slow construction and limit housing supply. Even in communities eager for growth, the process of securing plan approvals, conducting inspections, and complying with overlapping codes can take months, sometimes years. Every delay incurs costs: materials become more expensive, financing becomes more expensive, and developers must often scale back or abandon projects altogether.

These costs ripple through the economy. Fewer new homes mean higher housing prices climb. More expensive housing means workers live further from their jobs. And long-distance commutes mean local governments lose the broad property base they need to fund essential services.

House Bill 361 holds local governments to a professional standard that reflects the urgency of the moment. The bill rightly requires building departments to act within reasonable timeframes so that projects do not stall simply because a local office lacks sufficient capacity. Requiring that plan reviews and inspections for residential and non-residential building construction be completed within 30 days of request, the bill creates a transparent and fair expectation for government timeliness.

Equally important, House Bill 361 gives contractors and property owners a practical alternative when government delays persist. If a building department fails to perform a timely plan review or inspection, applicants may contract with qualified third-party private inspectors—already certified by the **Board of Building Standards**—to complete the work. This commonsense provision adds competition and accountability to the approval process and allows projects to move forward even when an overburdened office creates or suffers administrative backlogs. The approach follows successful models in **other states** where third-party inspection options have reduced bottlenecks, increased housing starts, and kept local agencies responsive.

The bill also reforms the maintenance of points of access from public or private property onto public streets and highways. It clarifies that when counties or townships issue access permits for construction on local roads, decisions must be made within a reasonable period, and that a failure to act within that time constitutes approval. By establishing a clear default rule, House Bill 361 reduces regulatory uncertainty, promotes consistency between jurisdictions, and helps ensure that necessary infrastructure can proceed without months of bureaucratic delay.

Critically, these changes will produce long-term benefits not only for developers and homeowners but for local governments themselves. Ohio's property tax system relies on the value and volume of taxable parcels. When housing supply stagnates, local governments face a difficult choice: raise tax rates on existing homeowners or reduce services. Neither outcome serves the public well. By contrast, when new homes are built and new residents move in, the property tax base naturally

expands and strengthens the community’s fiscal foundation without tax increases—a salient benefit in the face of current grassroots efforts to abolish property taxes.

Finally, as concern over affordable housing grows, Ohio needs these reforms. They do not ask taxpayers to subsidize construction. They do not compromise building safety. They simply help ensure that when developers and homeowners are ready to build, local government paperwork and bureaucratic approvals will not stand in the way.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering any questions that members of the Committee may have.



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