



November 12, 2024

Dear Chair Favor, Vice Chair Green, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of the Committee's efforts to address Columbus's rental housing. Improving access to and oversight of rental housing in our community is a necessary step toward sustainable growth and improved quality of life for the city's current residents and the many more to come.

County Auditors have a unique view into the housing and property use in their communities. We track new construction, major renovations, and housing sales. We are responsible for collecting contact information from rental property owners and making that information available to the public. We know where and under what system local governments provide abatements and other property tax assessments. We incorporate zoning standards into our appraisal process. We chair the tax incentive review councils (TIRCs) that review the utility of such assessments. With this unique lens in mind, I firmly support maintaining and increasing access to safe and affordable rental housing, that will not only meet our residents housing needs, but give them the stability and peace of mind needed to thrive.

It is no secret that Central Ohio's housing market continues to be increasingly competitive, largely due to population growth and demand outpacing our current housing supply. This means residential homes are selling for more and owners of rental properties are able to increase their rents, because the demand is there. While the changes to City zoning code will be helpful in building more housing options more efficiently, the City's support for Accessory Dwelling Units will benefit both renters and property owners in our community and bring Columbus in line with other growing cities. ADUs are known to increase housing supply without the need for new land development and make property ownership more affordable for existing property owners. Importantly, ADUs can allow older adults to remain in the neighborhoods they love, with a network of support nearby.<sup>1</sup>

We have heard from both landlords and tenants that increases in housing costs, including property taxes, are passed on to renters through higher rents and less flexibility where timely payment is an issue. Rent increase notifications, like those proposed, will not only help maintain housing stability for tenants by providing them a more reasonable period of time to secure housing they can afford, but will also give property owners the opportunity to maintain tenancy, which has become particularly challenging for "mom and pop" landlords, who rely on rental income to pay their property tax bills. This income stability allows rental homes to be held by local residents, rather than out-of-state investors.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.habitat.org/our-work/impact/affordable-accessory-dwelling-units-evidence-brief#:~:text=ADUs%20increase%20housing%20availability%20by,on%20fixed%20or%20limited%20incomes.>



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Holding out-of-state investor landlords and wholesale buyers accountable is critical to ensuring safe and affordable rental housing is available in Columbus. A national report by Redfin in 2022 found that in the Columbus Metropolitan Area (which includes Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Hocking, Licking, Madison, Morrow, Perry, Pickaway, and Union counties) investor/corporate involvement in transfers of property was up to 14% from 6% in 2015.<sup>2</sup> In Franklin County, there are currently 17 entities that own at least 100 parcels of residential property (excluding large apartment complexes) up from 11 such entities in April 2022. This type of profit-driven real estate purchase is most common for vacant and abandoned properties, and is closely linked to increased problems with property maintenance, code enforcement, and increased eviction filings.<sup>3</sup> The effect of this targeted, large-scale investment is increased property values and rents in what have traditionally been more affordable areas of Columbus and Franklin County at-large. Residents should not be paying more in rent to live in poorly maintained properties with no clear line of communication to the property owner.

R.C. 5323.02 requires residential rental property owners to register their properties with the County Auditor. Despite the modernizations my team has implemented since I took office in 2019, county auditors have limited authority to hold landlords accountable to this process. I welcome the opportunity to share data, best practices, and new ideas for ensuring compliance with the rental registry. Because of the impacts wholesale buyers and absent landlords have on property values (and by extension, rents) and the wellbeing of our neighborhoods, I enthusiastically support the Committee's mission to regulate residential property wholesaling and to create reliable communications channels between renters and rental property owners through a City Rental Registry.

I appreciate the Committee's attention to rental housing reform and look forward to the many ways these changes will enhance the safety, abundance, and variety of rental options in this community. Never hesitate to reach me directly at [AuditorStinziano@franklincountyohio.gov](mailto:AuditorStinziano@franklincountyohio.gov) or 614-525-5700.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/interactive/2022/housing-market-investors/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cleveland.com/realestate-news/2022/03/out-of-town-homeowners-make-strides-in-cuyahoga-county-with-big-gains-on-clevelands-east-side.html>