



May 23, 2023

Representative Michael Sturla, Chair  
Housing and Community Development Committee  
106 Irvis Office Building  
PO Box 202096  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2096

Dear Chairman Sturla

Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group (PCRG) is a non-profit organization with a mission to promote access to capital, advocate for an increase in homeownership opportunities and advocate for equitable land use policies in historically underserved communities throughout southwestern Pennsylvania.

We are writing today to support House Bill 711, introduced by Representative Emily Kinkead. PCRG was thrilled to see its companion bill in the Senate (SB 202) pass unanimously out of the Senate Urban Affairs and Housing Committee earlier this session. This legislation would provide Allegheny County land banks with an expedited sheriff sale process and lower the property's redemption period.

Land banks revitalize neighborhoods by transitioning blighted properties to beneficial reuses like single family homes, stabilization of standing structures supporting neighborhood commercial districts, and transforming vacant land into uses for community needs. However, blight comes with a significant cost. In 2013, an analysis conducted by Steel Rivers Council of Governments and Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments determined that blighted structures costs municipalities \$19.3 million per year in direct costs and resulted in property value losses between \$218 million and \$247 million. In the City of Pittsburgh alone, there is an inventory of more than 125,000 total parcels of taxable property with 20 percent or just under 24,000 being considered vacant, which contributes to an annual loss of \$4.8 million in property tax revenue.

Blight also has the indirect cost by negatively affecting the values of surrounding properties known as the "spillover effect." This continuous devaluation of neighborhoods creates a vicious cycle; as blight spreads, residents leave and municipalities struggle to produce enough tax revenue to maintain current infrastructure, making it difficult to attract new residents and businesses. In fact, the spillover effect has impacted the City of Pittsburgh with an estimated \$266 million in annual loss of property value for residential structures located within five hundred feet of vacant property.

The Pennsylvania Land Bank Act (PLBA) provides special abilities that makes it easier for land bank communities to gain access to abandoned properties and determine their outcome through a Sheriff Sale process, but not tax sales like Pittsburgh's Treasurer's Sale. Unfortunately, tax sales are cumbersome and do not produce a clean and insurable title until a separate court action to quiet a title takes place.

We believe that HB 711 would accelerate and enhance the ability of our local land banks in the regions to return vacant, abandoned, and tax delinquent property to productive use. Our organization thanks you for your attention to this matter and look forward to the bill's passage.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at 412-354-0642, or by email at [crosselot@pcrg.org](mailto:crosselot@pcrg.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Rosselot".

Chris Rosselot  
Director of Policy  
Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group

Cc: Representative Rich Irvin, Republican Chair