



REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF FAYETTE, PENNSYLVANIA

**PENNSYLVANIA SENATE
MAJORITY POLICY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING ON HOUSING ATTAINABILITY
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026**

Good morning Senator Argall and members of the Pennsylvania Senate Majority Policy Committee and welcome again to beautiful Fayette County, Pennsylvania. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding housing issues in Fayette County and throughout southwestern Pennsylvania.

My name is Andrew French, and I serve as Executive Director of the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority. For decades, our Authority has served as the County's leading agency for housing rehabilitation, community development, blight remediation, land banking, and property reuse. We operate at the intersection of public investment and neighborhood stabilization, ensuring that limited resources produce measurable and lasting results. In addition, I serve as Chair of the Legislative Committee for the Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies (PAHRA), representing housing and redevelopment authorities across the Commonwealth in policy discussions related to housing, blight remediation, and community development.

Despite market challenges and limited private reinvestment in many of our communities, the Redevelopment Authority has achieved meaningful, quantifiable progress that has had a significant demonstrated impact throughout Fayette County. Perhaps one of the most significant impact has been the investments made to rehabilitate and preserve our existing housing stock.

Through a combination of federal, state, and local funding sources, the Redevelopment Authority has rehabilitated and preserved thousands of owner-occupied homes, extended the useful life of aging housing stock, enabled seniors to age safely in place, addressed accessibility barriers for residents with disabilities and prevented displacement of low- and moderate-income households. We believe and know that each rehabilitated home represents not only a safer living environment, but also stabilized property values and strengthened neighborhoods.

The Authority also serves as Fayette County's designated land bank, thanks to the valiant efforts of our own Senator Pat Stefano and other legislative partners who worked on the passage of Pennsylvania Act 33 of 2018, which enabled counties to provide land bank powers to redevelopment authorities across the Commonwealth. Through that collaboration, we were able to align our existing redevelopment powers with the expanded tools provided under the Pennsylvania Land Bank Act.

As the County's land bank, we have been able to acquire tax-delinquent and abandoned properties in a strategic manner, clear title and resolve complicated ownership issues, demolish unsafe and structurally unsound buildings, prepare sites for productive reuse, transfer properties to responsible owners committed to rehabilitation, and support infill development consistent with local planning goals. These additional powers have significantly strengthened our ability to combat blight in a systematic way rather than on a case-by-case basis. It allows us to assemble parcels, eliminate barriers to redevelopment, and return properties to the tax rolls more efficiently.

The Redevelopment Authority has also utilized funding through Fayette County's local Act 137 Affordable Housing Fund and through the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund (PHARE) to undertake Homebuyer Development initiatives, which have involved both new construction of single-family homes working in partnership with local non-profits, and the provision of down-payment, closing-cost, and gap-financing assistance to first-time homebuyers. Through these initiatives, the Redevelopment Authority has stabilized existing neighborhoods, created new ones, and helped hundreds of families realize the dream of homeownership.

All of these efforts and initiatives would not be possible without two critical things: the availability of local, state, and federal resources that can be adapted and utilized to address local priorities, and the administrative and operational infrastructure to deploy complex funding streams in a responsive and responsible manner. We've been fortunate in Fayette County to be able to utilize a wide variety of funding resources to support our local initiatives, however it has been a challenge. We find that when certain funding sources are sporadic or short-term, it undermines long-term planning, strains staffing, and limits our ability to respond strategically to emerging housing challenges.

One of the more recent funding resources through the Commonwealth that offered a tremendous amount of flexibility was the Whole Home Repairs Program. With approximately \$1.8 million allocated to Fayette County, we have been able to assist more than 40 households, preventing the loss of homeownership for vulnerable families. The program's flexibility allowed us to comprehensively address habitability issues, including roof replacement, electrical hazards, failing HVAC systems, plumbing deficiencies, structural repairs, and accessibility modifications. In many cases, these investments were the difference between a home being preserved or becoming another blighted property requiring demolition.

We are encouraged that investments such as housing preservation are included in the recently released Pennsylvania Housing Action Plan, which recognizes that Pennsylvania's housing challenges require coordinated, multi-level solutions. The Fayette County Redevelopment Authority's work is directly aligned with the priorities in the plan, which includes preservation of existing housing stock, addressing aging and deteriorated homes, increasing housing supply across income levels, strengthening local capacity, expanding flexible funding tools, and supporting land banks and blight remediation strategies. Our rehabilitation and housing preservation programs preserve existing units. Our land bank activities remove barriers to redevelopment. Our partnerships with HUD, DCED, PHFA, and local municipalities reflect the coordinated approach envisioned in the Action Plan. The Action Plan provides a strong framework. The next critical step is ensuring reliable funding mechanisms and policy tools to implement its recommendations at the local level.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to addressing Pennsylvania's housing needs. The Redevelopment Authority looks forward to the continued partnership with our colleagues at the local, state, and federal levels to continue our work on advancing housing initiatives that help sustain our great neighborhoods and communities and continue to make Fayette County a great place to call home.