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To: House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

From: Stacey Smith, City Clerk, and Bruno Rehbein, Building & Zoning - City of Concordia

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 2314

Date: Friday, February 22, 2019

For many years, the City of Concordia has been trying to clean up its blighted and abandoned properties. Over the last 12 years, we have played a part in the removal or rehabilitation of over 70 unsafe and dangerous structures through a program which requires the participation of the property owners and incentivized by a 50% reimbursement once the project is complete. We have only touched the surface of what needs to be accomplished to clean up our city. We have recognized approximately 35 residential structures which should be rehabilitated or removed. We have had several inquiries over the years from owners of blighted commercial structures who are interested in the program, but the costs are too high and the reimbursement too low on these for successful participation. Our governing body and staff held a citywide listening tour last year, to encourage citizens to come out and voice their concerns. We asked what the citizens would most like to see. Overwhelmingly, their answer was to clean up properties, whether it be to remove the structures, or take care of the yards. Our citizens desire beautiful neighborhoods.

There are many reasons a structure can become blighted, unsafe or abandoned, but a significant amount of the blighted and abandoned residential structures can be attributed to those who don't intend to ever take care of the property. They do not pay their property taxes, and are often many years in arrears. In many cases, the owners do not reside in our community. In the meantime, the city is mowing and cleaning up the property, with years of special assessments towards a property they never intend to keep. Each year, our city assesses \$20,000-\$30,000 towards these types of properties. This is generally money we cannot recover.

Our city, like so many others in our state, is actively pursuing new businesses and manufacturing plants. We want to put the best face we can on our community. Giving us an avenue to expedite dealing with these kinds of properties would help us accomplish our goals. We ask that you consider HB 2314 by listening to the voices of your constituents.

Do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stacey Smith".

Stacey Smith
City Clerk

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruno Rehbein".

Bruno Rehbein
Building Inspector