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## **Ohio foreclosures lower but remain elevated**

### **Damage from the subprime-lending crisis endures**

The number of foreclosure filings in Ohio last year dropped to less than half the number at the peak of the housing crisis in 2009, but the level remains unacceptably high and Ohio should take immediate steps to reduce the rate. Since 1996, following two decades of elevated foreclosure levels, Ohio has had more than 1 million foreclosure filings.

A new report from Policy Matters Ohio shows foreclosure filings in Ohio numbered 40,479 in 2015 – down 7 percent from 2014, but still 2.5 times higher than level before subprime lending took hold in the mid-1990s.

“The subprime lending crisis and years of elevated foreclosures have created lasting hardships for families,” said Amanda Woodrum, the report author. “Communities suffer from declining home values and blight, and local governments are burdened with related costs they increasingly cannot afford because of falling property tax revenues and state funding cuts.”

A comprehensive statewide approach is needed to ameliorate hardship, commensurate to the severity of the crisis. Ohio has the ability to reduce foreclosures and the damage left in the wake of the foreclosure crisis by boosting state investment in housing counseling, legal aid and affordable, quality housing. The state can also help by restoring local government funding – cut drastically by the Kasich administration – and by supporting local efforts to reduce blight.

The Policy Matters report provides a county-by-county snapshot of foreclosure filings in 2015. Ohio’s 10 largest counties accounted for more than half the filings, but the number of filings in these counties dropped more (9 percent) than the state average since 2014. Filings in Franklin County declined 30 percent, Lucas 18 percent, and Stark 12 percent. Filings increased in Summit and Mahoning counties.

The foreclosure density in Richland County was highest in the state, more than double the state average, with nearly eight foreclosures per 1,000 residents. The state average was three foreclosures per 1,000 residents.

“The housing crisis is starting to ease, and now is the time for assertive policy to restore our neighborhoods so that the next generation can build wealth and thrive with the stability that safe housing provides,” Woodrum said.

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*Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute  
with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.*