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State Representative Rick Perales

Ohio's 73rd House District: Western Portion of Greene County

House Bill 127 – Sponsor Testimony

Representatives Rick Perales and Jonathan Dever

House Economic Development, Commerce, and Labor Committee

April 25, 2017

Chair Young, Vice Chair DeVitis and Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding House Bill 127. This bill will require contractors to use certified, third-party welding inspectors to conduct welding certification tests for their employees.

The current Structural Welding code allows contractors to not only "self-test" their workforce, but to appoint an individual from within their own company as a "Qualified Person" to oversee that testing and assume the responsibility of inspection of all welding performed for the contractor. Due to the lack of oversight by a third party this method obviously provides an opportunity for unethical practices to take place. This ultimately puts lives in danger, as poor welds can cause a structure to collapse during or after construction.

The construction industry is often plagued with compliance issues and unethical practices due in part to a lack of oversight and enforcement. The best method to ensure the quality and integrity of structural steel welding by the welder is to require that a contractor working on a project must have their welders tested at an American Welding Society (AWS) accredited testing facility. The AWS is well known for its code and certification procedures, which provide industry standards for the welding and joining of metals, plastics and other materials. Through their publications, communications, member services, events, educational resources, and certification procedures, AWS keeps welding professionals and those interested in materials science up-to-date with the most current advances and procedures in the industry.

Having a third-party conduct the qualification testing using a certified welding inspector (CWI) will insure that the welding being done on a construction project is done by a competent welder. Safety and structural integrity should be everyone's number one priority and having qualified welders welding on all construction sites will achieve this goal.

As a Civil Engineer myself, I was surprised that no regulations existed in the current code to ensure the integrity of our steel structures. While few substantial failures have occurred, there have been recorded instances of unqualified and even non-existent “welders” working on large scale building projects across the state. For the safety and security of the public, it is crucial that we institute these best practices in our state before something tragic happens. Chair Young, Vice Chair DeVitis, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan, and members of the House Economic Development, Commerce, and Labor committee, thank you for hearing my House Bill 127, and I am happy to answer any questions you have.