



**BEFORE THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COMMERCE AND LABOR  
COMMITTEE OF THE OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
REPRESENTATIVE RON YOUNG, CHAIRMAN**

**TESTIMONY  
OF  
ROB BRUNDRETT  
DIRECTOR, PUBLIC POLICY SERVICES  
THE OHIO MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION**

**JUNE 19, 2018**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Rob Brundrett. I am the Director of Public Policy Services for The Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA). I am providing proponent testimony today on behalf of OMA regarding House Bill 551. The OMA was created in 1910 to advocate for Ohio's manufacturers; today, it has nearly 1,400 members. Its mission is to protect and grow Ohio manufacturing.

Manufacturing is the powerhouse in Ohio's economy. In addition to copies of my testimony I have provided committee members with a copy of "2017 Ohio Manufacturing Counts." This book is prepared annually by the OMA to provide facts about the importance of manufacturing to Ohio's economy.

Manufacturing is the largest of the state's 20 industry sectors. Manufacturing contributed more than \$108 billion in GDP in 2016, the most recent year represented in this publication. This amounts to nearly 18% of the state's economy. The second largest industry sector is government at 11%. Ohio is the third largest manufacturing state in the U.S. following only California and Texas.

Almost 700,000 Ohioans work in manufacturing and these workers earn an average \$58,000 per year.

Looking at these statistics it is evident that Ohio's economic growth is tied largely to manufacturers' ability to recruit and train sufficient numbers of workers. The biggest constraint to this growth, as you know, is the significant disparity between the number of jobs in manufacturing and the number of qualified applicants. The talent gap is driven by at least these factors: 1) shrinking labor pool, including the increasing baby boomer retirements; 2) rapid technology change that requires nonstop training for sophisticated systems ; and 3) competing recruitment demand from other sectors, all vying for the same bodies.

In addition, there is a misconception among young people, and the people who influence them, including their parents and educators, that manufacturing is not a thriving industry with challenging career opportunities and competitive pay. Further severing the connection between workforce and the manufacturing industry is the absence of an efficient statewide training and recruiting system that bring together manufacturers, educators, community leaders and the public workforce system.

Currently, many industry leaders, post-secondary and K-12 institutions are working in isolation, focusing on their individual niches rather than in a larger collective system. Regionally, manufacturers are missing opportunities to collaborate – within a system -- with each other and training providers to close the skill and talent gap. In order to meet

the demands of the manufacturing sector and skill up the workforce, industry leaders must work with service and training providers to align local, regional and statewide assets to manufacturers' requirements and needs.

OMA has embraced Industry Sector Partnerships as a model for addressing workforce development challenges. Sector partnerships put employers in the driver's seat and have demonstrated effectiveness across the country. Manufacturers within a regional labor market work together to influence alignment around common solutions with education and training, economic and workforce development and community organizations. The key elements of sector partnerships are:

- Industry leadership (CEO/Executive level) drives the agenda
- Manufacturers identify and collectively address priority workforce issues
- Workforce, economic development and education partners work as a system to meet industry needs
- All stakeholders pitch in to align resources and strengthen the community

For the past two years the OMA has worked to create a network of regional manufacturing sector partnerships. Through these efforts, the network of sector partnerships will ideally become a collective voice for – and system of – the manufacturing industry's workforce development priorities and solutions.

House Bill 551 could play an important role in a regional sector partnership. An obstacle manufacturing has in developing workforce is getting middle and high school students exposure to modern manufacturing. Our members are constantly trying to figure out new ways to expose younger people to manufacturing. House Bill 551 can support manufacturers by permitting 16- and 17-year olds to work in manufacturing, especially during the summer months when school is out of session. Currently students must be affiliated with some specific school program in order to work at a manufacturing facility if they are under the age of 18.

This bill would open the job and career opportunities in manufacturing to students who through a variety of reasons are not enrolled in special manufacturing-related school programs. The bill has the opportunity to touch a new crop of students who never knew they could be interested in manufacturing. This exposure at a younger age is beneficial in developing the next generation of makers.

House Bill 551 is a thoughtful piece of legislation that can be one piece of the puzzle as Ohio tackles the manufacturing workforce crisis.

The OMA would like to thank the sponsors of the bill and would encourage the committee to quickly vote in support of House Bill 551.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear here today. I'd be pleased to try to answer any questions that you might have.

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