



Office of Representative John E. Barnes, Jr.

Thank you, Chair Ginter, Vice Chair LaTourette, Ranking Member Boyd, and my esteemed colleagues on the Community and Family Advancement Committee for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on House Bill 679, which will enact the "Seeking Career Ladder Opportunities Act".

House Bill 679 will prohibit a claimant's unemployment benefits for any week from being reduced by the amount of compensation that the claimant receives with respect to that week for participating in a qualifying training course, regardless of whether the claimant would otherwise be considered partially unemployed. A qualifying training course is one that prepares the claimant for an in-demand job in Ohio and its regions and is approved by the Director of Job and Family Services pursuant to the rules the Director must adopt under the bill. A claimant participating in an approved training course under the bill meets the continuing law requirement that a claimant must be able to work and available for and actively searching for work to maintain eligibility for unemployment benefits.

Under continuing law, an individual is "partially unemployed" in any week if, due to involuntary loss of work, the total compensation payable to the individual for that week is less than the individual's weekly unemployment benefit amount. An individual who works part-time or performs odd jobs during weeks when the individual also files for unemployment benefits may still be eligible to receive unemployment benefits if the individual's earnings are less than the individual's weekly benefit amount.

An individual filing claims for unemployment benefits is required to report gross earnings for the week (Sunday through Saturday) that those earnings are earned, even if the individual has not been paid the earnings at the time of filing. Ohio law allows for an earning exemption of up to 20% of an individual's weekly benefit amount before a deduction is made. For example, an individual with a weekly unemployment benefit amount of \$400 has an earning exemption of \$80 ($\$400 \times 20\%$). If that individual earned income during the week of \$200, the individual would receive unemployment benefits for that week as follows:

- \$400 (weekly benefit amount)
- -\$120 (weekly earnings minus the earning exemption of \$80)
- \$280 (unemployment benefits received)

If the individual had weekly earnings of \$80 (the individual's earning exemption) or less during a week in which the individual also received unemployment benefits, the individual's unemployment benefit would not be reduced and the individual would receive the full \$400 in addition to the earned income.

Thank you again for this opportunity, I would be happy to answer any questions.