



Chairman Brinkman, Vice Chairman Henne and Ranking Member Boccieri, my name is Jeff Smith, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Ohio Insurance Agents Association (OIA). I am here to provide members of the committee with an overview of OIA and our members.

The Ohio Insurance Agents Association is a statewide trade association that represents the collective voice of 1,400 independent agencies that employ nearly 10,000 Ohioans. We represent independent insurance agencies of every size, from small, family-owned businesses to large agencies with multiple locations. Our members represent all 88 counties in Ohio, with the largest concentrations located in Cuyahoga, Franklin and Hamilton Counties. OIA membership encompasses nearly three-quarters of all independent agencies that focus on property and casualty insurance in Ohio.

Independent agents offer many types of insurance – auto, health, home, life and business insurance – from many different companies to match consumers with the best choices for their particular needs. We advocate for legislative and regulatory policies that support a strong economy and competitive insurance marketplace for independent agents and their clients to do business.

Our mission is to elevate the importance of insurance and champion the personal and professional advice that only independent agents can provide to consumers and businesses. We are committed to fighting the commoditization of insurance, and believe having the right insurance matters. Unfortunately, many Ohioans are unknowingly incurring greater risks because they prioritize price and convenience over professional advice and guidance.

OIA helps our member agencies protect consumers and employers by offering them access to the best resources, tools and professional development programs available. OIA serves our members in four key areas: advocacy, professional development, business solutions and industry thought leadership. OIA is affiliated with two national associations serving independent agents – IIABA “Big I” and PIA.

Independent agents have a significant footprint in Ohio, writing 82 percent of the commercial insurance policies and 44 percent of personal insurance policies in the state. This exceeds the national market share average of 80 percent commercial lines and 35 percent of personal lines.

One of the biggest challenges that our members face is perpetuation. As you heard in some of my colleagues’ presentations last week to the committee, Ohio’s insurance industry will require approximately 29,000 new workers to fill positions by 2024 – whether newly created through growth or vacant due to employee turnover. Of the 29,000 new workers that are needed, nearly 20 percent are insurance agents. Looking at this more closely, this number represents a growth rate of 18 percent for insurance agents for a ten-year period beginning in 2014 and ending in 2024.

To assist with this, OIA is a member of the Insurance Industry Resource Council (IIRC), which is a collaboration within the Ohio insurance industry to create a statewide career awareness initiative to address the coming industry talent gap. Formed in 2012 after Gov. John Kasich challenged the industry to develop a long-term strategy to combat the talent shortage, the IIRC has overseen the building of a public-private coalition consisting of insurance companies, insurance trade associations, institutions of higher learning and public officials all focused on attracting new talent to Ohio’s insurance industry.

I hope this testimony and overview of OIA has given you a better perspective on independent agents and the critical role they play as trusted advisors to Ohio’s insurance consumers and the health of Ohio’s economy.

I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.