

WRITTEN TESTIMONY | Ohio House Transportation & Public Safety Committee House Bill 206

June 21, 2017

Thank you Chairman Green, Vice Chair Greenspan, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the committee for allowing me to submit written testimony today in support of House Bill 206. My name is Kenny McDonald and I serve as the Chief Economic Officer for Columbus 2020, the regional economic development organization for the 11-county Columbus Region.

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As you know, economic development is very competitive. Ohio and its communities are competing with those around the United States and around the world to secure the next headquarters, manufacturing operation, or research and development center. Likewise, the companies that currently operate here are competing with others to grow their revenue and deliver quality products and services in a global marketplace.

Moving products, ideas and people around the world is how commerce is done, and Ohio's infrastructure must be maintained and invested in to support the growth that we enjoy currently, and to generate future economic opportunities. It is imperative that we work to expand both passenger and freight airline service and the infrastructure to support it in order to secure investment and jobs.

John Glenn Columbus International Airport, for example, served over 7.3 million passengers in 2016, with over 150 daily flights to more than 41 destinations. Each of these flights represents an economic relationship that we enjoy with other states and metro areas. Direct flights in particular help to enhance relationships and the goods and services able to be exchanged between markets. Imagine the same principle applied to every airport in the state. They represent the people and businesses that travel to and from Ohio, bringing their talents and their capital to our markets.

Additionally, air freight – both international and domestic – plays a large role in the economic development of Ohio. Last year, 200 million pounds of air cargo went through Rickenbacker International Airport (LCK). Apparel, auto parts, and even livestock are imported and exported from Rickenbacker each week. This freight is consolidated from markets as far as 500 miles away, generating economic activity and creating jobs in Ohio. Investments in this infrastructure supports more flights inbound and outbound by both charter aircraft and regularly scheduled flights from great companies like Cathay Pacific, Cargolux, Etihad, and Emirates.

Both commercial airlines and air freight contribute significantly to the ability of the state and Central Ohio to attract and retain businesses. In order for us to continue to grow and compete on a global stage, we have to look to expand and sustain service and the infrastructure to support it within Ohio. HB 206 is a positive step because it not only creates the Commercial Airline and Air Freight Commission, it requires the Commission to actively study how we can be better at providing air service to and from Ohio airports.

Thank you for permitting me to share my perspective on HB 206.



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