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Chief Colin Altman
Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association
House Bill 575, Proponent Testimony
House Ways and Means Committee
May 22, 2018

Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Rogers and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 575. My name is Colin Altman and I serve as chief of Miami Township Fire – Rescue in Greene County. I am here today on behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association as the Chair of our Volunteer Committee. The OFCA exists to improve the safety of Ohio by leading, representing, educating, and supporting Ohio's fire chiefs and emergency services. As a coalition of Ohio's fire service leadership, the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association offers our support of House Bill 575.

House Bill 575 authorizes an income tax credit for volunteer firefighters and volunteer emergency medical technicians. The income tax credit increases as the volunteer accrues more service years with \$2,000 after 11 or more service years set as the cap on the tax credit. The service years are calculated by one of two ways. First, a volunteer can accrue a service year by serving on 25% of the department's or organization's emergency runs during the year. The second way to accrue a service year is for a volunteer to serve 25% of the days in the year during which volunteer emergency responders performed tasks other than making emergency runs.

Ohio's volunteer fire service faces a very real crisis. As I have traveled across the state for the OFCA Volunteer Committee, I have heard the same story time and time again. Chiefs talk of the struggle to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters and EMTs. Increased training standards, expanded duties, an increasing volume of emergency calls and a more transient workforce make the fire service less attractive to volunteers, who traditionally have played a crucial role in community fire departments and annually save municipalities & townships across the state millions in personnel costs.

The volunteers that serve their communities as firefighters and emergency medical technicians deserve this tax credit for the service they provide. This tax credit will have a positive impact on

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the recruiting and retaining of volunteers. Any benefit or incentive we can provide to potential volunteers is welcomed and will be utilized.

Thank you for allowing me to testify on House Bill 575. On behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association, I would encourage your support of the bill, and would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.