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**House Commerce and Labor Committee
Chief Robert Rymer
City of Athens Fire Department
House Bill 289 Proponent Testimony**

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan, and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on House Bill 289. My name is Robert Rymer and I am Chief of the City of Athens Fire Department. On behalf of my department, as well as the over 1,600 members of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association, I would like to voice our support of House Bill 289.

House Bill 289 establishes some much-needed guidelines and criteria for elevator maintenance within the state of Ohio. Specifically, requirements that an elevator mechanic be licensed; complete a nationally recognized training program including an apprenticeship; and maintain his or her skill level through continuing education. These are just some of the guardrails to elevator maintenance which will benefit both the mechanic themselves, and public safety as a whole.

In the City of Athens, our fire department responds to an average of 4 elevator rescues per month. During an elevator rescue, the firefighters must extricate victims through various methods, such as lowering the car to another floor, or removing them through top escape hatches. Often victims are left in the car for long periods of time, until maintenance personnel can respond. Not only is the safety of elevator passengers a priority, but the safety of the firefighters in this situation is also paramount. Without proper maintenance protocols, firefighters are put in significant danger as they attempt to remove stranded elevator passengers.

Furthermore, fire chiefs are responsible for building inspections within our community, and while I don't specifically inspect the elevator, I must ensure that all individuals entering and exiting a building throughout the course of a day are able to do so safely, especially in the event of an emergency. A properly functioning, and reliable elevator is crucial to this process.



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House Bill 289 may not eliminate all the calls that our department receives for elevator rescues; however, it will ensure the elevators in our community, and throughout the state, are being maintained by licensed professionals with extensive training and education. Thus, we will likely be able to reduce the number of calls our stations run.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 289, and I am happy to answer any questions.