

Laura Fire Company Inc
Serving the Public since 1894

April 25, 2019

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Lippes, Ranking Member Rogers and members of the House Ways & Means Committee,

My name is Kenneth Saunders, I am a volunteer firefighter with the Laura Fire Department. In addition to my firefighting duties, I am also secretary-treasurer for our fire department. This is my 40th year of firefighting. Our department is located in the Village of Laura, Union Township, Miami County, Ohio.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of HB 143.

As I have been a firefighter for 4 decades, I have seen many changes in the fire service. One change I wish to direct attention to is recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

We are seeing a steady decrease of volunteer firefighters in the state. Examples are in 2013 - 13,078 volunteer firefighters, 2014-12,297, 2015-11,735 and in 2016-11,292. (source: Ohio Department of Safety). As the figures show, the number of volunteer firefighters are decreasing by the year. With 467 volunteer fire departments in the State (source: Ohio Fire Marshalls office), it becomes very apparent that we need tools to help recruit and keep volunteers on the job in these departments.

I have discussed the proposed HB 143 with other departments in close proximity to us and we all feel this would certainly help in bringing people into the service and give them incentive to stay.

As far as the cost of HB 143 verses benefit, if every firefighter took advantage of the \$250 tax credit, it would be 11,292 firefighters X \$250 equals \$2,823,000 a year. However, doing the math on what the 11,292 individuals saves by volunteering their time as follows:

2 personnel X 24 hours = 48 hours of time to be paid a day
48 hours X a wage of \$8.30 an hour = \$398.40 a day
\$398.40 X 467 fire stations = \$186,052.80 a day
\$186,052.80 X 365 days a year = \$67,909,272 a year

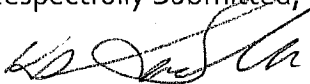
This is without any benefits of any type and it should be pointed out that the job cannot be done with just 2 people per shift per station. The illustration is just to put numbers to the situation.

The amount of money that the volunteers save the public far outweighs what the tax credit from HB575 would cost in lost tax revenue.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this matter.

Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth D Saunders', written over a horizontal line.

Kenneth D Saunders, Sec. Treas.
Laura Fire Company Inc