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HB 222 Sponsor Testimony: Senate Ways and Means Committee

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Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity today to testify as a sponsor of HB 222.

This legislation aims to increase training opportunities for new truck drivers in order to address the industry's growing driver shortage. This bill seeks to assist companies who invest in training their drivers by offering employers a nonrefundable tax credit. The credit will be equal to one-half of the employer's actual training expenses, and capped at \$25,000 per company.

The trucking industry transports over two-thirds of all freight throughout the United States. The drivers that move that freight play a critical role in our economy's success. Unfortunately, trucking companies are having a difficult time finding and attracting drivers. In 2014 the industry was in need of an estimated 38,000 drivers. Since then, with our roaring economy, that number has grown to well over 50,000 with no sign of slowing down.

To help address this problem, HB 222 will give companies the resources needed to train drivers and therefore produce more highly qualified CDL holders. While some companies are able to invest the thousands of dollars it takes to provide job training to future drivers, others simply do not have the resources.

By increasing training opportunities this legislation will help address the growing demand for truck drivers throughout the State of Ohio. It will also open doors for Ohioans seeking entry into well-paying career fields involving heavy equipment operation. In my experience, when a company trains an employee to get their CDL it is an opportunity for that employee to better themselves by adding to their income, by raising their wages, because of the value they bring to the company.

I am a small business owner, and I wear the hat of a CDL truck driver when I'm needed. That's because the hardest position to fill in my company has always been a CDL truck driver since they are in such great demand. After getting frustrated because I could not find drivers I started training current employees to be drivers on my own dime. Having trained several employees of my own, I know what a huge expense this can be to a company. My hope is for this bill to help other small companies across Ohio have the resources they need to train drivers too.

In the House, a 3-year sunset provision was attached to the credit. Also, a change was made that provides parity between the CDL skills test examination fee charged by DPS and those allowed for private testing facilities.

There may be some concerns that this bill will cost the state \$3 million on the heels of the COVID-19 Crisis. It's important to consider this tax credit will help Ohio's trucking companies recover from the pandemic by partially alleviating costs associated with training drivers.

Also, this bill can help Ohioans who were recently laid off and might be looking for a new career. Providing training to Ohioans looking to enter an essential position in the trucking industry is something everyone should be able to get behind!

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, thanks again for the opportunity to speak on HB 222. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.