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Chief Colin Altman
Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association
Senate Bill 286, Proponent Testimony
Senate Ways and Means Committee
September 22, 2020

Chair Roegner, Vice-Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 286. My name is Colin Altman and I serve as Chief of Miami Township Fire-Rescue (MTFR) in Greene County. I also serve as the 2nd Vice President and Chair of the Volunteer Committee for the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association

Miami Township Fire-Rescue is a primarily volunteer department consisting of six full-time employees, eight part-time employees, and 25 volunteer members. As the Chief of a predominantly volunteer fire department, I am here today in support of legislation that will help offset the personal expenses that many volunteer firefighters incur as a result of their service.

Senate Bill 286 authorizes a tax credit of up to \$500 for volunteer firefighters who use their personal funds to purchase safety equipment that is essential to their duties as a firefighter.

While I wish that my department were able to buy 100% of the protective equipment needed for the job, that is unfortunately not the reality with local government budget constraints. The gear that many of the volunteers for MTFR have had to purchase on their own includes radio pagers, radio straps, winter jackets and other uniform items. The average cost that a volunteer in our department spends out of their own pocket for equipment is between \$400 and \$600.

In addition to the financial support that this tax credit would provide, it will also help volunteer departments around the state recruit and retain volunteer personnel. Volunteerism for fire departments had drastically declined in recent years. Many departments that used to have waiting lists for volunteers now have no choice but to actively recruit personnel. While I acknowledge that SB 286 may not be the silver bullet for this problem that is plaguing volunteer departments, it will be a tool in the toolbox as we attempt to recruit new volunteers or retain the ones that we have.

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Thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 286. 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.