



Testimony Before the Finance Subcommittee on Government and Agency Review

Presented by Jacqueline T. Williams
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Good afternoon Chairman Faber and members of the Finance Subcommittee on State Government and Agency Review. I'm Jackie Williams, Director of the Ohio Department of Commerce. Thanks for the opportunity to speak today about the provision in House Bill 49 that would consolidate operations of the Manufactured Homes Commission into the Department of Commerce.

When it comes to homes in the state of Ohio, Commerce is responsible for most of the oversight including finance, construction, sale, and most importantly, safety. Ohio regulates construction through the Ohio Department of Commerce's Division of Industrial Compliance. It houses a staff of independent, professional construction and housing safety experts.

There is one exception to our oversight in this field, and that is manufactured homes. Incorporating the duties of the Manufactured Homes Commission into Commerce will extend the same oversight and safety protections to manufactured home owners that are enjoyed by other Ohio citizens. Whether it's a permanent structure or manufactured home, Ohioans deserve to be safe. That's why the Governor has proposed bringing manufactured home construction and sales under the same authority that regulates construction. This consolidation will offer Ohioans countless benefits including cost, responsiveness, expertise and safety.

The savings result from consolidating Commission responsibilities with similar operations in the Division of Industrial Compliance (DIC) and the Division of Real Estate and Professional Licensing (REPL). **An important priority for Commerce is to reduce costs paid by licensees. Commerce will cut costs and licensing fees by at least 40%.**

Between DIC and REPL, we license approximately 83,000 professionals. The addition of 850 more can easily be absorbed.

Our stakeholders depend on their licenses and certifications for their livelihood, which means low fees are just as important as speed and responsiveness.

DIC & REPL have worked to ensure that turnaround time for licenses, permits, certifications, registrations, investigations, and inspections is as timely as possible. We understand that delays in applications can adversely affect construction schedules, sales to customers and increase

costs. Thanks to advances in technology our turnaround time for inspections and licenses can be handled within three business days, and often times the same day.

When proposing this consolidation, the health and safety of manufactured home occupants is of paramount concern, and Commerce offers a unique advantage unmatched by any other agency.

DIC employs dozens of staffers with decades of experience, including Board of Building Standards certified architects, engineers, electricians, and plumbers. The importance of proper inspection, installation and high standards with manufactured homes cannot be overstated. Our experienced team at DIC is fully capable of meeting these responsibilities efficiently and cost-effectively.

Another benefit offered by Commerce taking over is the issue of fire safety, and the work of the State Fire Marshal's Office. Manufactured homes present unique challenges in the event of fires. According to data from the State Fire Marshal's office, you are 4.2 times more likely to die in a fire in a manufactured home compared to a fire in a traditional home. With our fire safety expertise, we will work to educate manufacturers, dealers and consumers about fire prevention measures.

Commerce is adept at taking on many functions and seamlessly integrating them within existing operations. The proposed consolidation would result in a streamlined, accountable manufactured homes process, from plan review, to purchase, and after. Commerce can easily assume the work of the Commission with no adverse impact to stakeholders, and while passing along significant cost reductions, and providing a strong focus on safety standards for manufactured homes residents.