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**Senate Bill 250**

**Senate Judiciary Committee**

**Sponsor Testimony**

**March 20, 2017**

Chairman Bacon, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for allowing me to present sponsor testimony on SB 250. SB 250 which could be dubbed the “Ohio Critical Infrastructure Protection Act” is written to provide much needed safeguards for our state’s critical infrastructure.

In recent months there has been a heightened focus on critical infrastructure. At times this focus has produced both positive and negative outcomes. On the positive side, people are beginning to see how critical infrastructure safely delivers products that are essential to modem life. On the negative side, some people and organizations are going beyond peaceful protest and are targeting these facilities and putting others in danger in an attempt to make a statement. There have been numerous instances of individuals and groups attempting to disrupt operations at facilities and/or damage vital infrastructure in the name of “protest.” For example, there have been a number of reports of tampering with valves and controls at pipeline facilities. This may sound like a minor act, but activating valves can create extremely dangerous situations along the route of a pipeline and puts others in jeopardy. The facilities that are often the target of these protestors provide essential energy, communications and other vital services and products to the entire state.

Fortunately, we have not seen any dangerous or catastrophic events here in Ohio due to such unscrupulous and dangerous actions. SB 250 seeks to discourage and frankly deter such activities by stepping up the penalties associated with certain types of wrongful acts. Specifically, the bill before this committee would punish certain acts, including criminal mischief, criminal trespass, and aggravated trespass committed at a critical infrastructure facility. It will also impose fines on those individuals and organizations that are found to be complicit in these offenses, and impose civil liability for damage caused by trespass at a critical infrastructure facility.

To be clear, SB 250 is not an attempt to restrict or limit anyone’s First Amendment right to free speech or one’s ability to protest peacefully. This proposed legislation is aimed at those who cross the line and intentionally damage critical infrastructure which in turn places others or the general public in jeopardy. For your reference, I have attached a flyer from an “action camp” in Monroe County and an excerpt from the Federal Register detailing a coordinated effort of some individuals to tamper with pipelines in other states.

There are many Ohio companies and organizations that support this legislation and you will be hearing from them in subsequent hearings. I urge your favorable consideration of SB 250 and I am happy to respond to any questions from the committee.