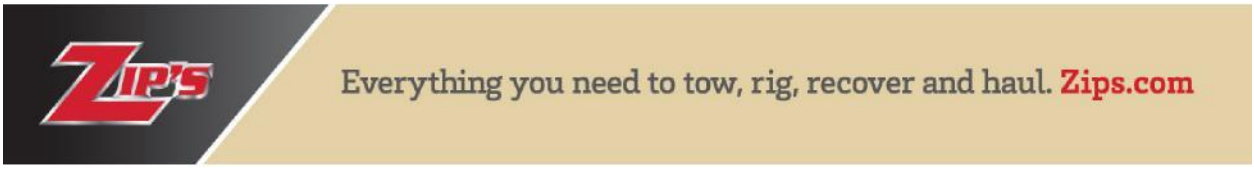

Thank you Chairman LaRose, Vice Chair Kunze, Ranking Member Tavares and members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee for the opportunity to testify as a proponent of HB 26. My name is David Rottinghaus and I was asked to speak to you on behalf of the Association of Professional Towers of Ohio to give you an understanding of Heavy Duty Towing & Recovery companies and the essential role their heavy duty recovery equipment plays in regards to public safety.

My father Paul and I own and operate Zip's Truck Equipment, Inc out of New Hampton, Iowa. Zip's has specialized in the sale of automotive towing & recovery equipment since 1968. We currently employ over 140 people, have customers in all 50 states, and this past year sold over 700 new and used tow trucks. As of last year, we now have sales representation out of our Detroit location covering the northern parts of your state of Ohio. It has been our mission to create a marketplace for transportation and recovery equipment, providing the services necessary for its purchase, maintenance and disposition. Our goal is to raise the quality of life of those in the towing and recovery industries by helping to implement innovations and technological advances through our service, workmanship and support.

A vast majority of the general public still envision a stereotypical old tow truck puttering down the road, with a chain hanging, and a hook on the end. The towing industry and heavy duty recovery trucks have seen a drastic change in just the past 20 years. The industry today is now very sophisticated with GPS tracking software, digital video recorders and stateofthe-art equipment with certified, professional operators. The overwhelming traffic congestion, secondary accidents, and demand for public safety have played a major role in a shift in the equipment required to get the job done. Towing and Recovery companies are now considered emergency "first-responders" and the recovery equipment is just as crucial as a fire truck or ambulance at the scene of an accident. The industry has evolved to find more efficient and safe equipment to improve traffic-incident management. Current required equipment is becoming outdated, and therefore, inefficient and costly. For every minute traffic is backed up due to an accident, the risk for secondary accidents and personal injuries increase. A piece of equipment called a Rotator is an integral part of heavy duty recovery. It is perhaps the most innovative piece of towing equipment in the world, specifically designed to recover overthe-road tractor trailers and other large vehicles, clearing the scene of an accident faster and safer.

Before I discuss the features and benefits of the rotator, I believe it's vital to understand what a conventional, heavy duty tow truck is and its limitations when used at an accident recovery scene. Because of its lightweight design, the conventional tow truck is perfect for performing its

primary function : towing a disabled truck from point A to point B. It does this by utilizing a hydraulic underlift, also known as a wheel lift. The wheel lift attaches to an axle or set of tires of the disabled truck. The operator then secures the truck to the wheel lift and safely transports the truck to a repair facility. A conventional tow truck's secondary function is the ability to recover wrecked trucks. A conventional, heavy duty tow truck has a static hydraulic boom, which utilizes two hydraulic winches and cables for pulling and lifting. The boom lifts up and extends out the rear of the truck and is designed to essentially drag a wrecked truck out of the ditch, while applying limited lifting force.

Conventional Tow Truck

Image 1

To fully utilize the boom of a conventional tow truck at a recovery scene, in many cases, the operator must position the truck perpendicular to the wrecked truck and road. This positioning creates road lane closures of traffic - sometimes blocking an entire freeway. What is known today as a common recovery may take an extended amount of time to clear the road and get traffic moving freely. In many instances, it may take a conventional tow truck even longer due to the lack of lifting capabilities and the repositioning of the truck required to get the job done. In extreme cases, when trying to upright a heavy load, a 2nd or even 3rd truck may be needed to complete the task.

Conventional Tow Truck Recovery Scene

Image 2

When a freeway is shut down for an extended amount of time, there is direct correlation between traffic congestion and economic loss - especially in major metropolitan areas. More importantly, there's an increased potential risk of secondary accidents, personal injuries, and even death. Because a conventional tow truck wasn't primarily designed for recovery, being restricted to this type of truck is inefficient and costly. These limitations and inefficiencies of a conventional tow truck is why the Rotator should be considered a necessity for improved public safety.

Rotator Recovery Truck

Image 3

The Rotator is a stateofthe-art, heavy duty vehicle specifically designed to improve recovery capabilities. It's primary function is to recover tractor trailers and heavy equipment in emergency response settings. Like a conventional tow truck, most rotators have the ability to tow a disabled truck down the road, but what differentiates the rotator is the presence of a crane-like boom which rotates 360°.

Because of the rotating boom feature, the rotator reduces the likelihood of lane closures. The operator positions the truck on the shoulder, parallel with the road, and in most cases only takes up one lane of traffic. Rather than working off the rear of the truck, the rotating boom swings over the side of the truck and goes to work - taking a fraction of the time to upright the wreckage and clear the road. When used properly, a rotator is also safer for the operators because they now have the ability to reach out overtop the wreckage and lift, versus only dragging and pulling a wrecked vehicle. The unique lifting ability of the rotator overcomes many unknown variables, saves time and reduces safety risks that a conventional tow truck encounters.

Rotator Truck Recovery Scene

Image 4

The point of concern is the fact that, when compared to a conventional tow truck, the rotator is sometimes up to 40% heavier in weight - exceeding the maximum axle weights allowed in some states, like the state of Ohio. Many dollars have been spent engineering the rotator to be lighter, yet maximizing the strength and capabilities. The rotator design has resulted in the addition of twin steering front axles and tri-rear axles to address weight concerns. But at the end of the day, there's no getting around the fact that weight is required to move weight. In this regard, it would be prudent to recognize that rotators should not be restricted as they are essential for proper emergency response and incident management.

The federal government has recently passed the “FAIR TOW Act” (H.R. 3247). This created a weight exemption on federal highways for any tow truck during the primary transportation of a disabled truck from the scene of an accident. This is a great start; however, additional actions at the state level need to be made to allow recovery first responders to do their job in the quickest and safest manner possible. What makes our Towing and Recovery Industry unique is that these professionals put themselves in harms way everyday because they fully recognize the negative impact accidents create. Our professionals place great value on the general public’s safety and the safety of their operators. These towing and recovery companies are making major financial investments in the equipment and investments in training of certified recovery operators to clear the roadway in a timely and safe manner. These companies are “on-call” 24/7 to respond to an emergency in rapid fashion.

In conclusion, it is my professional opinion that the Rotator, is crucial for emergency response, incident management and public safety. The rotator is a breakthrough piece of equipment that out performs conventional heavy duty tow trucks in recovery situations. It is this advancement in technology that has allowed the towing and recovery industry to better protect the lives of the public and prevent personal injury. I encourage the committee to consider the recommendations of policy from the Association of Professional Towers of Ohio regarding exempting heavy duty towing equipment in emergency situations.

Thank you very much for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.