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Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Dave Burke, Ranking Member Vernon Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to speak in favor of reinstating the Ohio Motion Picture Tax Credit to H.B 166 operating budget.

My name is Lee Will and I currently serve as the Program Manager of the Tri-C Film Academy and Student Production Office at Cuyahoga Community College. The Tri-C Film Academy began in 2014 as a non-academic program that is under the Workforce, Community, and Economic Development Division (WCED) of the college. The whole purpose of creating the Film Academy was to help build the workforce needed to sustain a growing film industry. We are a program that pairs trainees with working industry professionals as instructors who in turn will hire or recommend them for hire on upcoming projects. The trainees that enroll in our program are very diverse in backgrounds and ages. They are college graduates looking to get their foot in the door or have decided to change their career paths. Some are independent filmmakers looking to hone their skills and make new networking connections. Others are current high school graduates not interested in taking an academic path. The results show that the program works, half of each cohort have steadily been working on the films that have come to NE Ohio.

However, without the Ohio Motion Picture Tax Credit (OMPTC), these opportunities will go away. Even with the current OMPTC, several of these trainees have sought work in other states like Georgia, Louisiana, and New York in order to have a steadier stream of income, but they do come back. Both trainees and industry professionals have indicated to me that if the tax credit is eliminated they will have no choice but to move to find sustainable work. This will be devastating to the industry and will drive more young creative talent from our state.

In order to keep and grow the bright and creative talent in Ohio we need to keep the OMPTC in the operating budget. Even better, improve it through the proposed S.B. 37 amendments. I implore you to consider reinstating the Ohio Motion Picture Tax Credit to the H.B. 166 operating budget to keep a thriving film industry in Ohio.