



June 24, 2020

The Honorable John Eklund  
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee  
Ohio Senate  
Statehouse  
Columbus, OH 43215

**RE: House Bill 606 Testimony**

Dear Chairman Eklund:

On behalf of the men and women who work in Ohio's manufacturing sector, I write to convey support for the immunity provisions contained in House Bill 606. The bill provides responsible immunity and legal protections against frivolous lawsuits as Ohio strives to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. However the bill requires revision for full benefits to be realized.

Manufacturers across our state, deemed essential businesses, took prudent steps to adopt COVID-19-specific safety practices and protocols to protect their workforces while producing the goods that were in demand. Manufacturers that could repurposed their factories to produce needed emergency protective products and equipment.

A House floor amendment to designate COVID-19 as an occupational disease for certain industries under Ohio's workers' compensation statute has shifted the burden of proof to the employer and eliminates an employer's defenses, thus creating – for all intents and purposes -- a guaranteed claim. Moreover COVID-19 exposure injuries are already being granted by the Bureau of Workers' Compensation so the current system is functioning without modification.

If this one provision is not stripped from the bill, it will plague Ohio's food and beverage producers, which were specifically targeted by this amendment, the very essential businesses that have been feeding our nation. The last thing we should do is burden them with potentially ruinous new costs. The amendment language is also the subject of free-standing House Bill 605. This issue is better debated separately.

With this improvement, House Bill 606 importantly maintains Ohio's competitiveness by responding to the temporary emergency situation. It is sound legislation that will prevent a proliferation of questionable lawsuits that could plague businesses during a time of fragile economic recovery.

I appreciate your consideration of these perspectives and would welcome any further discussion. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ryan Augsburger".

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