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**Ohio General Assembly  
Ohio House of Representatives  
Representative Jim Hoops**

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Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Upchurch and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify along with my joint sponsor Representative Sobecki on HB 129, which would establish the Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program.

Many of you have likely heard from businesses in your districts about the challenges of finding qualified workers. This challenge has hit the transportation industry especially hard. According to the American Trucking Association, the current driver shortage is over 60,000 and it could grow to over 160,000 by the year 2028. While many trucking companies have enough applicants to fill open positions, they are turned away due to hiring constraints specific to the trucking industry, including age requirements, CDL testing standards, drug and alcohol testing and clean driving records.

HB 129 is designed to address the need for qualified drivers by creating a dual scholarship and loan program. The bill is designed to require enrollees to have a stake in the process while also removing the financial barriers facing Ohioans attempting to pursue a career in one of Ohio's most in-demand professions. The Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program appropriates \$5 million to provide students attending CDL school with a combination of grants and loans. Measures have also been added to the bill to incentivize drivers to remain in Ohio once they complete their CDL training.

This legislation is needed now more than ever as there are few state resources specifically designed to offer financial aid to students pursuing a CDL. In fact, in the most recent operating budget (HB 166), funding was eliminated from the OhioMeansJobs Workforce Revolving Loan Program, which was heavily utilized by students attending CDL school. We hope HB 129 will help fill the gap left by the elimination of the revolving loan program.

The Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program will create opportunities for Ohioans seeking higher paying jobs, without saddling them with debt. HB 129 will also ensure Ohio's industries in need of drivers have access to qualified CDL holders. I hope you can support this important piece of legislation and we will be happy to answer any questions you may have.