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**House State and Local Government Committee
House Bill 564
Proponent Testimony
Wednesday, March 30, 2022**

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 564. My name is Randall Hanifen and I am an Assistant Chief for West Chester Township Fire-Rescue in Butler County. I am testifying this morning on behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association. The OFCA supports House Bill 564 as an additional tool in the toolbox for township fire departments that are struggling to recruit and retain enough Fire and EMS personnel.

House Bill 564 would temporarily increase the annual hour limit for those considered as part time employees for the purposes of health coverage in Ohio's townships for one year from the date the bill is signed. We appreciate the thoughtful way that Representative Koehler crafted this legislation to ensure that it does not cause unintended issues with federal law in the Affordable Care Act. The bill differentiates between townships that qualify as large employers under the ACA and smaller townships that would receive even more relief under this bill.

This legislation is important to Ohio's township fire departments because it would allow departments to maintain adequate staffing levels that are derived from an ever-shrinking pool of part time firefighters. Departments like mine struggle daily to guarantee proper and adequate staffing to assure safety and service to our communities partly due to the current limitations in allowable hours. Many fire departments are forced to respond understaffed due to the lack of manpower caused by firefighters meeting the allowable hours threshold at various times of the year. An increase to the allowable hours would be a staffing lifeline that would help assure that we can perform

the duties required of us and provide the highest quality of service and care for our communities.

Thank you once again Chairman Wiggam and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today. I want to thank Representative Koehler for sponsoring this important legislation and I will be glad to answer any questions at this time.