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**Senate Local Government and Elections Committee**  
**Senate Bill 299**  
**Proponent Testimony**  
**Tuesday March 22, 2022**

Chairwoman Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath, and members of the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 299. My name is Kasey Farmer, and I am the Assistant Chief of the Basil Joint Fire District in Baltimore, Ohio. I am testifying this morning on behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association. The OFCA supports Senate Bill 299 as an additional tool in the toolbox for township fire departments that are struggling to recruit and retain enough Fire and EMS personnel.

Senate Bill 299 would increase the annual hour limit for those considered as part time employees in Ohio's townships. We appreciate the thoughtful way that Senator Schaffer crafted this legislation to ensure that it does not cause unintended issues with federal law in the Affordable Care Act.

To meet the requirements of federal law, but still assist townships, Senate Bill 299 would allow for a small increase in the annual hour limit for part time employees in Ohio's large employer townships. For Ohio's townships that are not designated as "large employers" under the Affordable Care Act, this bill would provide significant assistance by permitting part time employees to work up to 1,976 hours annually or 38 hours per week on average. This would represent an increase of 476 hours per year from current law

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 with 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, especially for departments that do not fall into the "large

employers” category, 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 Chairwoman Gavarone and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today. I want to thank Senator Schaffer for sponsoring this legislation and I will be glad to answer any questions at this time.