



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

Making it Easier to Work in Ohio by Reducing Occupational Licenses

Interested Party Testimony
Ohio Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
House Bill 509

Greg R. Lawson, Research Fellow
The Buckeye Institute

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As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Martin and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify on the recommendations in House Bill 509.

My name is Greg R. Lawson. I am the research fellow at **The Buckeye Institute**, an independent research and educational institution—a think tank—whose mission is to advance free-market public policy in the states.

Senate Bill 255 of the 132nd General Assembly—a bill **championed** by The Buckeye Institute—requires legislative panels to weed through Ohio’s overgrown thicket of bureaucratic licensing boards that often deprive trained professionals and job-seekers of the fruits of their labor. Under Senate Bill 255, if the General Assembly does not proactively reauthorize a board, it withers and dies. **House Bill 509** represents the latest and much-needed work in this area.

The Buckeye Institute’s policy brief, ***Opening Doors II: Occupational Licensing Reform in Ohio After Senate Bill 255***, identified 63 licenses that Ohio should eliminate or reform. Many of those recommendations—nearly a third—appear in House Bill 509, which means that good work is being done and there is more yet to do.

Some of the bill’s changes with respect to funeral directors and embalmers, for example, should help streamline apprenticeship opportunities for those looking to enter the field. The bill wisely eliminates many temporary licenses; aligns more closely with continuing education requirements for pharmacists; and makes fees, continuing education and licensing renewal for school psychologists more consistent with those in surrounding states. These changes along with universal licensing recognition for out-of-state licenses will improve Ohio’s overall occupational licensure environment, making the state fairer and more attractive to professionals.

Ohio needs these reforms to remain economically competitive and reverse disturbing demographic trends. As The Buckeye Institute explained in ***Forbidden to Succeed: How Licensure Laws Hold Ohioans Back***, high fees and training requirements can reduce occupational job growth by 20 percent as prospective workers who cannot afford the fees and mandated training remain unemployed or underemployed. Occupational licensing restrictions make hiring more difficult for employers and tell skilled workers that their skills and training are insufficient and unwanted here. An Institute for Justice **report** estimated that as of 2018, the state’s occupational licensing regime had already cost Ohio more than 67,000 jobs.

Such job loss contributes to Ohio’s perennial emigration problem. In survey after survey, Ohio ranks among the **top 10** states with the most outbound migration, an exodus that has cost Ohio yet another congressional seat. This concerning statistic is reinforced by 2021 Census data, which shows a **decline** in Ohio’s population. Changing the occupational licensing regime is not a silver bullet to fix these troubling trends overnight, but it can play a role in reversing them.

House Bill 509 and additional legislative efforts to re-evaluate Ohio’s occupational licensing regime will help reverse this trend and make Ohio more competitive in the long run.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee might have.



About The Buckeye Institute

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