



**BEFORE THE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
THE OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
REPRESENTATIVE JAY EDWARDS, CHAIR**

**HOUSE BILL 33  
TESTIMONY OF MONICA BROWN  
REGIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR, INTEGRATED SUPPLY CHAIN  
WHIRLPOOL CORPORATION**

**April 19, 2023**

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify before you today in support of House Bill 33. My name is Monica Brown and I am the Regional Human Resources Director of Whirlpool Corporation.

Whirlpool Corporation is committed to being the best global kitchen and laundry company, in constant pursuit of improving life at home. In an increasingly digital world, the company is driving purposeful innovation to meet the evolving needs of consumers through its iconic brand portfolio, including *Whirlpool*, *KitchenAid*, *Maytag*, *Consul*, *Brastemp*, *Amana*, *Bauknecht*, *JennAir*, *Indesit*, *Yummly* and *InSinkErator*. We have 61,000 employees and 56 manufacturing and technology research centers around the world. Here in Ohio, we have five manufacturing facilities and approximately 10,000 employees.

I am testifying today on behalf of my company and on behalf of The Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) to voice our support for critically important workforce provisions contained in the state operating budget proposal.

In recent years, Ohio manufacturers and their partners have devoted tremendous resources to modernize workforce development. From establishing a statewide system of industry-led sector partnerships, to advocating for improved training and funding, to promoting "earn-and-learn" models, manufacturers have transformed the way that the Buckeye State is forging the next generation of manufacturing talent. However, there is still work to be done and the DeWine-Husted administration has proposed a budget that will make significant investments into our state's workforce to address lingering workforce challenges.

In my role at Whirlpool, I see challenges to the state's workforce every day. Our manufacturing environment is changing rapidly. With our strategic imperatives including a focus on automation and digitalization, our employees and talent pipeline needs to have opportunities to learn and develop in order to adapt to a digital and automated work environment. This will all happen at an unprecedented pace and will require the appropriate learning experiences to support those changes. The challenges for talent availability are a real and present issue but the impact and nature of that problem will quickly become a crisis if we do not proactively develop the skills and talents of the workforce to be ready for the future state of manufacturing. We are fortunate in that we have built and developed strong teams over several decades at our five plants in northwest Ohio. And we remain focused on making sure we are providing rewarding careers for employees with opportunities for growth, and we strive to make Whirlpool the employer of choice.

While we have a strong focus on in-house training capabilities, including several recent investments in our training centers, our workforce development partnerships across Ohio are critical to providing current and potential employees with the skills they need to be successful in advanced manufacturing careers. Our career tech centers across the state

are often the first glimpse of what a manufacturing career can offer. These and other workforce development partners play a pivotal role in both helping middle and high school students understand the potential opportunities in the manufacturing sector, and also in upskilling our current workforce through apprenticeships, certifications and other opportunities.

As part of these efforts, funding to ensure career technology partners have access to the facilities and equipment needed to prepare Ohio's workforce for the evolution of advanced manufacturing is critical to Ohio's continued leadership in manufacturing. The State of Ohio has an opportunity to continue investing in its talent through House Bill 33.

The investment into career technical education is critical to maintain in the state's operating budget. As we continue to look for ways to address the labor shortage in our state, it is more important than ever to build up Ohio's career technical education programs. The as-introduced version of House Bill 33 proposed to invest \$200 million into upgrades for career technical facilities and \$100 million into purchases of new equipment. The proposed funding of \$200 million for the Career Technical Construction program to support establishing and expanding career technical programs has been reduced to \$100 million in the substitute bill, and we encourage the House Finance Committee to restore the original amount of \$200 million as further changes to the budget are evaluated. We are pleased to see the continued commitment to equipment upgrades as Ohio students need to be able to train on equipment that they will encounter in the workplace. To complement this provision, the OMA is requesting the establishment of a program, the Smart Technologies Assistance Program, to create competitive manufacturing grants that would enable small to medium sized manufacturers to invest in equipment to help modernize and innovate production processes.

Another program that is currently included in the budget is the state's continued investment into Industry Sector Partnership grants through the Ohio Department of Development. These grants enable manufacturers within a regional labor market to work together to influence alignment around common solutions with education and training, economic and workforce development, and community organizations. It is important to maintain the funding proposed in House Bill 33 so that manufacturers at the local level are able to influence training programs, maximize resources and services, and create a pipeline of future workers. Industry Sector Partnerships are a proven workforce development strategy that puts employers in the driver's seat and have demonstrated effectiveness in the state to help manufacturers expand regional talent strategies.

Lastly, the budget contains over \$50 million in funding for the TechCred program. Whirlpool has participated in several rounds of the TechCred program and believes it is important to help employers across the state upskill their employees. As the manufacturing industry continues to see improvements in modernization, it is critical that employers have resources available to help their employees gain technology-focused credentials.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of the House Finance Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on the state operating budget today. I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.