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Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Forhan, and Members of the House General Government Committee thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on House Bill 87. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction's (DRC) Ohio Penal Industries (OPI) has operated a flag shop at the Ohio Reformatory for Women (ORW) since 1926. Currently, 36 incarcerated women sew US, Ohio, and Prisoner of War flags 35 hours each week within the flag shop. These flags are created from raw materials to the finished product, including each star and stripe that is hand cut and sewn. These flags are sold to public agencies as well as Ohio citizens. We have recently added an addition to our flag line where we sell printed flags to offer a more affordable option for our customers. Increased flag sales stemming from the enactment of House Bill 87 would likely offer additional opportunities for more women incarcerated at the Ohio Reformatory for Women to participate in the flag manufacturing operation and obtain the rehabilitative benefits of the OPI work and job skill training program.

For a bit of background, OPI operates independently from the General Revenue Fund. We are self-sufficient, reinvesting all revenue back into OPI staff and incarcerated worker training and skill development. The Department of Administrative Services procurement process requires state agencies to purchase goods manufactured by OPI, including the US, State of Ohio, and POW flags.

There are currently 29 OPI operations in 13 facilities throughout the state, including the flag shop at the Ohio Reformatory for Women. OPI is committed to helping reduce Ohio's recidivism rate by providing work skills, training, education, and reentry services to our population before release.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony. If any committee members have any follow-up questions, please reach out to our office at any time.

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