



*Before the House Government Oversight Committee
Proponent Testimony on HB 455*

*Liz Baumgartner, Director of Economic Development and Tax Policy
June 4, 2024*

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey and members of the Ohio House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of House Bill 455. My name is Liz Baumgartner, Director of Economic Development and Tax Policy for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

For 131 years, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce has served as the state's leading business advocate, representing over 8,000 companies that do business in Ohio. Our mission is to aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness, and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans. As part of our mission, we seek to make Ohio the best place in the country for businesses to operate and grow. We want to thank the sponsors of this legislation, Representatives Patton and Manning, for their work on HB 455.

HB 455 creates the Ohio Ireland Trade Commission with the goal of further advancing economic, cultural and academic relations with Ireland. The Commission will study topics such as bilateral trade and investment, mutual economic support and mutual policy objectives between our state and Ireland. With nine members on the Commission, there will be representation from the Legislature, Irish American communities, Higher Education space and the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. We greatly appreciate being named to serve on the Commission and look forward to representing the business community to promote trade, investment, and economic growth between our regions.

Announcements in recent years have shown the deepening relationship both culturally and economically between the State of Ohio and Ireland. According to the Irish Embassy, Ohio and Ireland have exchanged nearly \$25 billion in goods and services over a four-year period from 2016-2020. Relations between the regions have expanded even further with the launch of a new direct flight route from Cleveland to Dublin through Aer Lingus last year, and with the Irish Embassy establishing their first Consulate office in Ohio.

At no cost to taxpayers, this commission will strengthen the State of Ohio and Ireland's deep economic ties, bringing in more cultural and economic opportunities, academic exchanges, and revenue for our state. Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 455. The Ohio Chamber supports the Commission and appreciates the opportunity to serve. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.