



*BEFORE THE HOUSE STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 76*

Good afternoon, Chairwoman John, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan, and Members of the House State & Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 76. My name is Justin Barnes, and I am the Director of Workforce, Small Business, and Technology Policy for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

As you may know, for 129 years, the Ohio Chamber has served as the state’s leading business advocate, and we represent 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.

In the Chamber’s recently published economic competitiveness study, the *Blueprint for Ohio’s Economic Future*, one of the recommendations made is to address and reduce regulatory burdens in Ohio that constrain economic activity and inhibit opportunities for growth. Our study has a section titled “Business Friendliness” which focuses on the policy choices Ohio can make that will make our state a more attractive place to own or operate a business.

The data highlighted in our report shows that Ohio ranks poorly when compared to other states, both in our region and across the country, on the issue of regulatory burdens. By one metric, when identifying the use of “restrictive words” in our regulatory code – those such as “shall, must, prohibited, required, may not,” etc. – Ohio trails only New York, California, and Illinois in the number of instances where restrictive words appear in the Ohio Administrative Code. Such burdens serve to deter new business ventures and hamper the success of businesses across Ohio.

The Common Sense Initiative identified numerous outdated or duplicative regulatory burdens through its push to “Innovate the Code,” using artificial intelligence to highlight ways to make it easier to understand and comply with Ohio’s regulatory landscape. We know that this bill is a part of that process, and we are grateful for Representatives Hall and White for addressing this burden directly, through House Bill 76. As they indicated in their sponsor testimony, the provisions included in this bill are projected to save Ohioans roughly \$44 million and 58,000 hours of labor that would otherwise be spent on compliance with burdensome and unnecessary regulations over the coming decade.

Streamlining Ohio’s body of regulations is one of the Chamber’s top legislative priorities for this session of the General Assembly, and we are again grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation.