



Joe Hale, Control Operator, Aromatics  
Cenovus Energy, Lima Refinery  
Testimony before the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify against House Bill 205, legislation that will not make our refineries safer.

My name is Joe Hale, the President of USW Local 624 in Lima, Ohio, and an operator in the Cenovus Energy Lima Refinery. I have worked in the Lima refinery for thirteen years and understand what is needed to ensure refineries are operating safely and protecting what matters – our workers and our communities.

As a control board operator on a diesel, benzene, and toluene unit, I am responsible for monitoring product flows, pressures, and temperatures while ensuring the products meet proper specifications. I work with four outside operators who check and verify the equipment is operating correctly, and our team manages the daily maintenance of refining equipment.

I am the President of my local Steelworkers union in Lima, and I proudly support union workers whenever I can. The USW is proud to work alongside hundreds of building trades contract workers every day in Lima and Toledo. Our embedded contract workforce is professional and highly skilled, and they prioritize safety – which is the USW’s highest priority wherever we operate.

While we support our union brothers and sisters, the USW does not believe that House Bill 205 will improve refinery safety. This legislation mandates that refineries contract with maintenance and construction workers trained in apprenticeship programs modeled after building trade apprenticeship programs. However, House Bill 205 does not factor in the specialized crafts needed inside refineries, and the apprenticeship mandates do not guarantee that a worker will possess the skills and professionalism that the USW insists upon.

What **does** make refineries safer? In the most recent *Joint Health and Safety* newsletter that I co-publish with Lima’s plant manager, we emphasized that focusing on reliability will continually improve safety. In the newsletter and our joint health and safety meetings, we discuss the connections between reliability and safety.

We need reliable equipment to continue to operate, and we need a workforce that can be relied upon to be safe and highly skilled. To ensure our equipment is reliable we need continued investments in highly skilled operators and maintenance crafts like the men and women represented by the USW. We also need to ensure that our outside contract workforce will reliably perform to our high standards.

We believe that the best maintenance workforce includes Steelworker crafts for daily maintenance and process safety, construction trades for additional repairs and projects, and the specialized crafts needed for turnarounds and large-scale projects. Within House Bill 205, construction is defined as all services performed at a stationary source, including maintenance. The USW has seen similar legislation passed in other states which led to the replacement of USW craftsmen and women. I am concerned that replacing my refinery's proprietary maintenance workforce of 37 workers with more than 300 years of maintenance experience and several years of operating experience within the Lima Refinery does not make us safer. It does just the opposite.

For these reasons, the USW stands in opposition to this anti-safety and anti-Steelworker legislation. I urge the Committee to listen to the United Steelworkers who operate our refineries and oppose this anti-safety legislation.

Thank you for allowing me to testify.