



Lyle Huffman, Vice President of Government Affairs

Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber

Opponent Testimony – House Bill 205

To Chairman Reineke, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Smith, and the Energy and Public Utilities Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 205 (HB 205). My name is Lyle Huffman, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs for the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber (YWRC).

On behalf of the Regional Chamber’s Government Affairs Council and our entire Board of Directors, I would like to present our letter of opposition to HB 205.

The YWRC is the third largest chamber of commerce in the Great State of Ohio, with nearly 3,000 member organizations representing over 150,000 employees in and around the Mahoning Valley. Our mission is “To provide the economic development, advocacy and business services to promote the growth of our members and Valley.” Our vision is “To be a catalyst for economic success, creating a prosperous Valley that is the preferred community in which to live, learn, work, and play.”

Our efforts to meet our mission and vision are often met with legislative hurdles that make it challenging to promote the growth and prosperity of the Valley and Ohio. HB 205 is one such hurdle because it effectively places more restrictions on companies and businesses already struggling to operate freely and competitively by increasing regulations and compliance measures and removing the industry’s ability to hire a workforce they deem qualified.

HB 205 will exacerbate our workforce issue by further narrowing the pool of workers with more stringent hiring requirements, essentially making this a “labor mandate bill.” For example, requiring the workforce in the oil refinery industry to only individuals in registered apprenticeship programs and who qualify as either a class A or class B journeyman severely limits the industry’s ability to perform. HB 205 also infringes on a company’s ability to contract. It requires the contracted company to meet the further strict guidelines of the labor mandate, which shrinks the list of companies available to provide services, resulting in increased production costs.

HB 205 is an obvious reintroduction of House Bill 235 from the 134th General Assembly with one questionably driven addition. HB 205 has a new provision requiring that ALL construction contractors “demonstrate a fluency in spoken English.” First, it is questionable that an English-speaking person is a better-qualified employee and provides a safer workplace. As has been proven throughout the State of Ohio and the United States, immigration is a proven solution to curbing and potentially solving our workforce crisis. A further limitation and regulation, such as requiring English and the preferred language, would not only harm the company’s hiring ability but would hurt Ohio’s ability to repopulate its taxpaying workforce and provide a disincentive for businesses to move here.

LYLE HUFFMAN, *Vice President, Government Affairs*

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In closing, the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber strongly opposes House Bill 205 because we recognize and advocate against legislation that we see as negatively impacting business. HB 205 will negatively impact the Mahoning Valley and the State of Ohio by not only relaying to the existing companies within Ohio, but outside our borders as well, that we are not a business-friendly state.

Finally, we oppose HB 205 because it does not meet our mission, "To provide economic development, advocacy and business services to promote the growth of our members and Valley." Nor does it meet our vision, "to be a catalyst for economic success, creating a prosperous Valley that is the preferred community in which to live, learn, work, and play."

Thank you for your time and consideration of our position. I would happily respond to any questions you may have in writing or in person.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lyle B. Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.