



Tom Balzer – President & CEO, Ohio Trucking Association
Proponent Testimony – House Bill 33
June 8, 2023

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Ohio Senate Finance committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Ohio Trucking Association (OTA) in support of an amendment that restores GRF ALI 235595 to \$20 million over the biennium, as found in the as-passed-by-House version of HB 33, which provides financial assistance to commercial truck driving students.

OTA was successful in working with the 134th General Assembly and the DeWine administration to establish the *Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program* in the last state operating budget and funded the program with \$5 million over the biennium. The program was an immediate success, with demand for scholarships far exceeding the supply of funding; every penny of that initial round of funding was accounted for within three weeks of the money becoming available.

This funding is meant to specifically assist individuals that are enrolled in training courses to obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL). The program provides financial aid to in-state students who complete a CDL program and agree to reside and be employed in Ohio for a minimum of one year upon completion; with 50% of the money awarded as a loan, and the other 50% awarded as a grant.

The program has been an immense success and provides a direct path for recipients to enter into a career in the trucking industry. At a time when our workforce challenges have never been greater, this program provides a crucial investment in an essential industry.

The "As Passed by the House" version of House Bill 33 recognizes the demand and success of the program and increased the Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program to \$20 million over the biennium. We respectfully ask the Ohio Senate to restore the \$20 million toward the effort of reducing the truck driver shortage in Ohio and nationwide through this innovative way to support the training for in-demand jobs in the Buckeye state.

We understand and respect the deliberative process the legislature goes through to ensure that the state's resources are spent in a judicious manner. As already demonstrated, there is a clear need for the continuation and expansion of funding to this crucial scholarship. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit written testimony. If there are questions from members of the committee, please feel free to contact me at tom@ohiotrucking.org.