



Rep. Scott Wiggam
77th Ohio House District

Chairman Wilkin, Vice-Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora, and Members of the Senate General Government Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on HB 327.

E-Verify is a federal, internet-based system operated by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a division of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA). In short, E-Verify is a free, efficient online service that confirms an employee's work eligibility in the United States within seconds by electronically cross-referencing DHS and SSA records.

Under current federal law, employers are required to complete an I-9 form for each new hire within the first three days of employment. Employers must retain these forms for three years after the hire date, but they are not required to submit them to any federal agency. This lack of submission and verification is, in our view, a key gap in the current system.

HB 327 provides the next logical step. Using the federal I-9 form already in place, employers will submit the completed form electronically and receive a confirmation of work eligibility within 3 to 5 seconds. Employers only need a web browser and internet access to securely access the system 24 hours a day.

Particularly in today's high-demand labor market, we've seen far too many cases where noncitizens and minors are exploited by employers. Let's call this arrangement what it is: human trafficking. HB 327 helps address this issue.

This bill offers multiple benefits: it gives employers peace of mind that their hires are legally eligible for work, provides investors with reassurance that contractors are using a legal workforce, and protects job opportunities for authorized workers. The federal E-Verify system is also nondiscriminatory; it requires employers to verify all new hires, regardless of race, national origin, or citizenship status, and prohibits selective verification practices.

HB 327 is targeted in scope, applying only to:

- State and local political subdivisions,
- Non-residential construction contractors,
- Employers with seventy-five or more employees in Ohio.

President Donald J. Trump's former acting director of USCIS, Joe Edlow, emphasized the importance of E-Verify, stating, "Research conducted on the effect of E-Verify found that illegal immigration in a state fell more than 50% when a state implemented a mandatory E-Verify law. This system is the single most important addition to the immigration toolkit, disincentivizing illegal immigration and leveling the playing field for employers who are committed to following the law."

According to the National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL), 22 states currently require the use of E-Verify for public and/or private employers, including Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia.

While HB 327, which passed the House in June with overwhelming bipartisan support of 85-6, alone won't entirely stop human trafficking in Ohio, it is a strong step forward and sends a clear message to those looking to exploit the system.

Thank you, Chairman Wilkin. I'll now turn it over to Rep. Swearingen, and we're happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.