

HB 327 Proponent Testimony – December 3, 2024

Chairman Wilkin, Vice-Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Demora and members of the Ohio Senate General Government Committee:

My name is Richard Ochocki, I am the Lead Organizer for the Ohio State Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters. On behalf of our 14,000 members in Ohio and in support of every construction worker in Ohio I am pleased to testify in favor of House Bill 327. HB 327 discourages unscrupulous Contractors, Labor Brokers and/or Human Traffickers from undercutting the wages and benefits of every honest, tax paying worker providing for their family while supporting their community.

In Ohio we have 15 full-time Organizers covering every inch of the State. These 15 Organizers spend their entire work week visiting jobsites and talking to workers. In April 2022 we brought in 24 organizers into Ohio and for two weeks visited jobsites and engaged with workers. We spoke to every Plumber and Pipefitter we could find in Columbus. Of the 573 Plumbers and Pipefitters that gave us their contact information 30% of these workers were undocumented. Undocumented workers were mainly in the Commercial sector of our Industry.

In June 2023 we brought in 160 Organizers for a week and visited every job site and talked to every Plumber and Pipefitter we could find in Ohio. It was alarming to find out that a little over a year later we found that undocumented workers were in most major cities in Ohio. (Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton, Lima, Canton, Akron and Toledo) and present in every sector (Residential, Commercial and Industrial) of our Industry.

As a lead organizer, I collaborate with other organizers from different states. The undocumented worker problem is not unique to Ohio. We have been hearing from other organizers around the country that Ohio is a future destination for these workers.

We must address the undocumented worker issue that is growing in Ohio by the minute. E verify is a huge step in the right direction to dissuade the use of an illegal workforce. Many contractors in our state already use the e verify program successfully. Thank you for your consideration and support of HB 327.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

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