



Ohio Contractors Association

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SENATE INSURANCE COMMITTEE
SB 116 – Opponent Testimony
Written Testimony of Michelle Holdgreve, OCA Legislative Director
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Chair Hackett, Vice Chair Lang, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Insurance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide opponent testimony on Senate Bill 116.

The Ohio Contractors Association represents Ohio's heavy/highway construction industry. Our 200 contractor members build Ohio's highway, bridge, water and sewer systems, and other critical infrastructure.

Because of the seasonal nature of infrastructure construction, our industry uniquely relies heavily on Ohio's unemployment system. Our highly skilled workforce cannot work year around. Not because they don't want to work, they simply cannot because of weather restrictions. ODOT and our other public agency project owners significantly limit work after a certain point, usually around Thanksgiving when temperatures drop and the ground freezes. Work can only begin again when weather conditions are favorable, which is usually around the end of March, beginning of April. Rain or unseasonably cold temperatures can extend this scenario even further.

Our workforce uses unemployment compensation to bridge the gap between weather shutdowns and the construction season. They are not abusing the system. The seasonal nature of highway construction dictates this. Without this compensation our workforce would be forced to leave the industry and seek other employment opportunities or move to another state with better weather or benefits. This would only exacerbate the current labor shortage our industry is facing.

According to a recent report by the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, the construction and maintenance of Ohio's infrastructure system supports approximately 132,000 full-time jobs across all sectors of the economy. These workers earn \$5.5 billion annually. Approximately 2.4 million full-time jobs in Ohio in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are completely dependent on the state's transportation network.

Ohio is seeing record economic growth and investments in highway infrastructure. Just a few months ago the DeWine Administration proposed, and the General Assembly approved the largest transportation budget in Ohio history. Our members do their part to deliver the needed projects by making significant investments in employee recruitment and training to retain and support skilled workers. The changes proposed in SB 116 would have detrimental impacts to those efforts. We urge you to oppose SB 116.