



LOCAL 18

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Honorable Bob D. Hackett, Chairman
Ohio Senate Insurance Committee
1 Capital Square, 1st Floor, Rm 132
Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Lang, and Ranking Member Craig of the Senate Insurance Committee:

My name is Michael Bertolone, and I am the Business Manager for the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 18. Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony on SB-116 today.

Local 18 comprises approximately 16,000 men and women who operate heavy equipment primarily in Ohio's Heavy and Highway and Building Industries. Currently, our members and contractors do the large majority of all ODOT and Building projects in Ohio.

I am writing today to voice our opposition to SB-116, the Unemployment Compensation Bill. SB-116 will reduce the current unemployment benefits weeks from the current 26 to a range of 12 to 20 weeks, along with eliminating all family beneficiary benefits.

The men and women of the Operating Engineers are all hard-working professionals who are only paid for the hours they work, no paid vacations, etc. Through no fault of their own, some of our members go onto the unemployment compensation roles here in Ohio after ODOT and the other building industries shut down because of inclement weather each year or because the job on which they were working has finished. They do not seek to be unemployed. Our members' benefits, such as health insurance, are directly related to hours worked. Members must work a certain number of hours yearly to be covered by our insurance.

Ohio's construction season usually starts in early April of each year, weather permitting, and finishes at the end of November each year. This is not by our choice but because of Ohio's inclement weather conditions.

During these months, our members are constantly enrolled in one of our four (4) state-of-the-art training facilities upgrading their skills and getting the necessary certifications and credentials required by contractors, owners, and state and federal agencies involved in the construction industries.

Each of our training facilities is equipped with an indoor training building exclusively designed so our members can train with full-sized construction equipment in a climate-controlled environment to keep up with our rigorous training schedules in the winter months, during which outdoor training is not an option. Many Senators have toured one of our facilities over the years to witness this training taking place indoors in the winter months.

These multi-million-dollar training facilities are paid for by monies directly deducted from each member's hourly wage, currently \$0.85 an hour.

Last year alone, Local 18's four (4) training facilities logged approximately 220,000 training hours completed by our journeymen and apprentices to provide our contractors and project owners with a highly trained workforce.

We do not take grants from the state or elsewhere to fund our training and training sites. They are all paid for by our membership (**approximately 12 million dollars yearly**).

Thus, the highways, the universities, the water treatment facilities, the airports, the automobile plants, the gas and oil pipeline projects, and many others get finished on time and on a budget here in Ohio because our professional workforce returns year after year. It is a career for our members, not a pass-through occupation as in some states. This may not be so if we seek to change the benefits that support the cyclical nature of Ohio's construction industry, especially in times of labor shortage as we are experiencing today.

In closing, we oppose SB-116 cutting workers' benefits and weeks from Ohio's Unemployment Compensation laws.

Thank you for allowing me to provide you with testimony on this critical issue to our membership and our industry today.

Sincerely Yours,



Michael Bertolone
Business Manager, Local 18