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Committees:

Agriculture and Natural Resources - *Ranking*
Government Oversight - *Ranking*
Judiciary - *Ranking*
Finance
Energy and Public Utilities

Chair Hackett, Vice Chair Lang, and members of the Senate Insurance Committee thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on SB 180, regarding fraud offenses involving state money or property.

Senate bill 180, to provide unemployment benefits to striking workers, is a critical piece of legislation that will help to assure that workers are not penalized for holding their employers accountable to fair treatment of employees and honoring labor protections. This legislation would declare an emergency and allow otherwise eligible individuals to receive unemployment benefits if their unemployment was caused by a strike at a facility owned or operated by their employer. Senate bill 180 would also allow unemployment-eligible workers to unemployed due to a strike to receive up to four weeks of benefits retroactively, but not earlier than when the strike began.

Following Toledo's United All Workers 2023 strike, which impacted a workforce of around 150,000 people,¹ my office has seen first-hand the impact strikes can have both on the side of financially strapped constituents, and creating conditions for those same constituents to thrive long-term when their efforts to encourage fair labour practices are supported. When we talk about supporting striking workers, we are talking about supporting grassroots efforts that will ultimately bolster our economy and keep people who want to work in stable, and accessible employment.

In New York, the impact of similar legislation has been so profound that their legislature is looking to further reduce their current 14-day waiting period to 7-days.² Under their legislation, thousands of eligible workers who are eager to return to their employers under better conditions are able to continue supporting their families while holding the line. In addition to New Jersey, who already has legislation permitting unemployment benefits to striking workers, we are among 9 other states having this discussion of how we can continue to support the

¹ "The UAW won big in the auto strike — but what does it mean for the rest of us?". Domonoske. November 2023. <https://www.npr.org/2023/11/12/1211602392/uaw-auto-strike-deals-ratified-big-three-shawn-fain>

² "Extending unemployment insurance to striking workers would cost little and encourage fair negotiations", Economic Policy Institute. Perez. January 2024.

working class in our state through legislation providing unemployment benefits to those on strike. We could be pioneers in the Midwest and across the nation for supporting the workers who have put us in office. Senate bill 180 serves as a litmus test for how much we truly want to support the laborers who carry our economy here in Ohio.

The UAW strike that had such a decisive impact in my district was far from the norm. Many strikes tend to have much shorter lifespans, but even the lack of a few days pay for some can be the difference between the comfort of stability and dire straits. Meaning that, the lesson from UAW was that workers need our support, but the extent of that support and the success of these workers, will depend on how quickly and efficiently we can respond to their concerns about wages and the rising cost of living. This legislation is how we do that, so that workers know that they have the security of the state services that their hard-earned tax money funds.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.

