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May 14, 2025

The Honorable Mark Johnson
Chair, Commerce and Labor Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street
12th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

The Honorable Lauren McNally
Ranking Member, Commerce and Labor Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High St
10th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: Testimony in support of House Bill 227 - Relating to the time frame required for excavation notification and other modifications to the excavation requirements.

Dear Chair Johnson, Ranking Member McNally, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sarah Magruder Lyle, and I am the Executive Director of the Damage Prevention Action Center (DPAC). I am also the President & CEO of the Common Ground Alliance (CGA). I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for this opportunity to submit comments in support of Representative Blasdel and Representative Johnson's bill HB 227.

DPAC's mission is to advocate for public policies and industry practices that protect underground utility infrastructure and those who work and live near these important assets. DPAC works to empower elected and public officials to safeguard their communities, improve worker safety and protect critical underground infrastructure by providing the Common Ground Alliance's data-driven resources and consensus-based Best Practices in damage prevention.

The Damage Prevention Action Center appreciates the Buckeye State's efforts to improve its damage prevention laws to protect underground utility lines and people who dig near them. DPAC supports policies that increase efficiency and consistency for locators and excavators across the country and that are in alignment with the Common Ground Alliance's Best Practices.

DPAC strongly believes that states must adopt comprehensive policies to modernize U.S. damage prevention industry by embracing innovation and technology to increase the resilience, safety and efficiency of our vast underground utility network. Such policies include:

- Effective, balanced enforcement for all stakeholders will drive behavior change.
- Removing special-interest exemptions for 811 notifications will reduce damages.
- Incentivize facility owner/operators to provide distributed real-time mapping and geospatial data to 811 centers in a timely fashion.
- Mandating reporting of all facility damages to the 811 center will provide additional information about how and why damages occur.
- Ensure laws allow effective implementation of CGA Best Practices.

DPAC is pleased that Ohio's stakeholders are working together to update the code and help move the industry forward. Specifically, DPAC supports the changes in HB 227 that will ensure that all facility owners in the state participate in the 811 system. HB 227's revision of the definition of excavation helps move Ohio in the right direction by removing blanket exemptions and narrowing exempted activity. This is a tremendous step forward in improving Ohio's damage prevention process and increasing confidence that the "one-call" notification system will work for all stakeholders.

We also support HB 227's changes in the language regarding the notification of planned excavations. DPAC is working with stakeholders across the country to increase consistency in key requirements such as this. HB 227 changes the current requirements, which are 48 hours but not more than 10 working days before commencing excavation, to two working days, not including the day of the call, and the ten working days to sixteen calendar days. This revision is consistent with CGA's Best Practices, and the majority of states across the nation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address the committee on the very important matter.