



**Representative Erika White**  
Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 150  
House Commerce and Labor Committee  
Wednesday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Thank you, Chair Johnson and Vice Chair Lear, and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee for the opportunity to provide joint sponsor testimony on House Bill 150 with Ranking Member McNally. This bill — The Clock Out Kids Act — is an essential piece of legislation to protect one of Ohio’s most vulnerable populations: *our children*.

In the early 20th century, child labor was widespread across the United States. Reformers and families saw how excessive work threatened children’s *education, health, and safety*.

The passage of the **Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938** marked a turning point. It banned “*oppressive child labor*” and set minimum ages: 16 for non-hazardous work and 18 for hazardous occupations.

These provisions were written not only to protect children from danger, but to preserve their right to *learn before they labor... to grow before they grind... and to thrive before they toil*.

To picture what was at stake — imagine a 13-year-old in a textile mill in 1908, working long hours in a loud, dust-filled room, climbing to reach bobbins, earning a few dollars a week, and falling behind in school.

And remember Carmela Teoli, a 13-year-old immigrant girl whose hair was caught in mill machinery. Her courage to testify before Congress helped change national law. Her courage in testifying before Congress helped inspire the very reforms that protect children today. Her story reminds us: *behind every statistic is a child whose education, health, and potential were put at risk*.

The provisions and subsequent amendments were created to protect educational opportunities for children, and to ensure their health and safety by prohibiting employment in certain fields.

The Fair Labor Standards Act sets various parameters for employers that have minors in their workplace. [There are guidelines for hiring a minor in a restaurant, amusement](#)

[parks, and even grocery stores.](#) Under the FLSA, children under the age of 18 are prohibited from working in the meat processing and slicing industry, cannot work with power-driven saws, and various other roles that could result in serious injury or death.

Here in Ohio, we cannot become complacent. Even with the FLSA in place, gaps remain, and too many young Ohioans can still slip through the cracks. The U.S. Department of Labor recently found violations in our own backyard — a 15-year-old injured in a sawmill in Dundee ... two 17-year-olds sent onto roofs in Brook Park.

These are Ohio's children today — not headlines from another time.

They are our sons and daughters, our students and neighbors, and for our grandchildren—whether we know them by name or by their jersey number— they are our children — the ones we teach, coach, mentor, and see in our own communities and they remind us that these protections are not relics of history — they are responsibilities of the present.— and that's why enforcement can't wait!

Currently, Ohio laws also regulate the ages, times, and types of work that minors can perform. *Minors between the ages of 16 and 17* are able to gain a broader scope of employment with more hours *compared to children in the 14 and 15 age range* who are unable to work more than three hours a day and 18 hours a week. They must also not be employed during school hours unless they fall under certain exceptions grants in Chapter 4109 and must not work before 7a.m. and after 9 p.m. from June 1<sup>st</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>, or during any school holiday of 5 days or more; after 7 p.m at any other time. These rules were created so that a child's first job remains being a student.

The Clock Out Kids Act proposes fining an employer for \$50,000 for each knowing violation of continuing law restrictions related to the hours a minor may be employed. Currently, if an employer were to employ a minor that violates any of the current law's prohibitions, is charged with a misdemeanor on a first offense and a third-degree misdemeanor of each subsequent offense. The proposed additional charge is in addition to the punishments under current law. The bill uses the additional \$50,000 to create the Minor Law Enforcement Fund in the state treasury. Fines are paid into the fund and must be used to administer and enforce minor labor law.

The bill also requires that a school employee must immediately report to the principal or the principal's designee when they are made aware, or have reasonable suspicion, that the minor's employment protections are being violated.

This legislation gives the state *real* tools to protect real children.

The importance of protecting our children cannot be overstated. Many of us remember helping a parent or neighbor — mowing lawns, painting, learning a trade. That kind of informal work is guided by love, supervision, and the intent to teach responsibility. But what we're seeing now is very different.

Children are not just helping out — they are clocking in. They're missing class to cover shifts, working late hours, or taking on dangerous jobs without training or oversight. These aren't lessons in responsibility — they're risks to a child's future.

Children deserve opportunities to focus on their education, extracurriculars, friends, and family without the burden of adult responsibilities. Children should not be the solution to employers facing workforce shortages, and the Clock Kids Out Act ensures they remain protected.

That's why The Clock Out Kids Act matters. It strengthens Ohio's commitment to our young people by:

Ensuring greater enforcement of labor laws

Creating clear reporting channels

Preserving every child's right to learn, grow, and thrive before being asked to work.

Ohio has always believed in hard work —but hard work should never come at the cost of a child's education, safety, or well-being.

This bill draws that line clearly — and enforces it firmly.

When we fail to protect children, we all pay. Kids who work excessive hours are more likely to drop out of school, earn lower wages as adults, and struggle with lifelong health issues.

That leads to a smaller skilled workforce, lower tax revenue, and greater dependence on public assistance — a cost far higher than proper enforcement.

But beyond the economics, the real cost is moral. It's the loss of potential — the engineers, teachers, and tradespeople Ohio will never know because childhood was traded for cheap labor. When we fail to protect and educate our children, we're not saving money —we're spending our future.

The importance of protecting our children cannot be overstated. They deserve time to learn, to laugh, and to live — not to carry adult burdens before they're ready.

Children should never be the solution to workforce shortages. They are our future workforce, future innovators, and future leaders.

The Clock Out Kids Act ensures Ohio's children grow up safe, educated, and ready to build Ohio's tomorrow — not worn down before it begins.

It protects those most vulnerable, especially the young people who are economically pressured to trade their future for survival today.

Too often, families and children are told that “a bird in the hand is better than two in the bush.” But when that “bird” comes at the cost of a diploma, a dream, or a child's health — it's not opportunity, it's exploitation.

This bill makes it clear that in Ohio, we do not balance our labor shortages on the backs of our children. We invest in their future, because their future is Ohio's future.

I will end with this — as someone who knows the value of being an educated worker, not just making money for now, but earning a future for myself and my children.

Hard work is an Ohio value — but never at the cost of a child's safety, education, or well-being.

I am deeply grateful for those who protected me — in law and in life — so that I could be here today to protect the next generation. For Ohio, we must have an educated, not exploited future for Ohioans and its children.

Again, thank you, Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Lear, and members of the committee, for your time and thoughtful consideration.

My joint sponsor and I are happy to answer any questions you may have.