

**Ohio House Development Committee
Ohio Business Roundtable – Invited Testimony**

Nikki Cooper, Vice President of Business Engagement & External Affairs

Chair Hoops, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and Members of the House Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today and share about the Ohio Business Roundtable.

My name is Nikki Cooper, and I am the Vice President of Business Engagement and External Affairs for the Ohio Business Roundtable (OBRT), a statewide business association comprised of CEOs and Presidents of the top companies in the state. We currently have over 125 members, collectively employing over 600,000 Ohioans and generating a revenue of more than \$2.5 trillion, which contributes significantly to Ohio's economy.

Our membership includes industry leading companies representing over 20 Ohio industries, including—but not limited to—companies such as KeyBank and Huntington in the banking sector; American Financial and Nationwide in the insurance sector; Kokosing in construction; CareSource, Cleveland Clinic, and many of Ohio's children's hospitals in healthcare; The Ohio State University and Miami University in higher education; Owens Corning, RPM International, Inc., and Procter & Gamble in manufacturing; AEP, Vistra Corp., and Marathon in energy and utilities, among others.

The Ohio Business Roundtable supports policies that will strengthen the state's economic and workforce development, reduce onerous barriers for businesses, and foster an environment for businesses to invest, grow, and compete in the global economy.

Ohio is undergoing a period of economic growth, generating new jobs and expanding opportunities across the state. In recent years, through the work of JobsOhio, we have attracted transformative investments— including Intel's semiconductor manufacturing facility, the LG/Honda battery plant, Ford's EV plant expansion, and a wave of data centers from Meta, Google, Amazon, and Microsoft. Additionally, key advancements in aerospace, defense, and energy manufacturing

have been driven by industry leaders such as GE Aerospace, Joby Aviation, Anduril, and Ultium Cells.

These successes, fueled by Ohio's pro-business policies and strategic investments, have positioned our state as a national leader in economic development. However, with this expansion comes new challenges. To maintain this momentum and ensure Ohio's long-term prosperity, we must proactively address critical needs in energy, housing, and workforce development.

Energy: Strengthening Infrastructure for Growth

Following years of steady demand, the U.S. is now facing a surge in energy consumption, with Ohio's peak electricity demand projected to increase by 50% by 2034. Without proactive measures, our state could experience power shortages within two years, jeopardizing future investments and economic stability. The Ohio Business Roundtable's recently released [Energy Competitiveness Study](#) outlines a comprehensive, all-of-the-above approach to reinforcing Ohio's energy infrastructure. I have submitted a copy of the report's executive summary along with my testimony today. We would encourage everyone to review our report and the corresponding state policy recommendations, aimed at securing our state's energy future.

Housing: Expanding Access to Meet Workforce Needs

A growing workforce requires accessible housing, yet Ohio is facing a housing shortage that makes it difficult for workers—particularly middle-class families—to live near their jobs. To meet rising demand, we support continuing the state's low-income housing tax credit, the removal of unnecessary zoning barriers, and incentives to repurpose existing buildings into residential spaces. These initiatives will ensure that Ohio's workforce can grow in tandem with the state's economic expansion.

Workforce & Education: Preparing Ohioans for High-Tech Jobs

A strong economy depends on a skilled workforce, particularly in high-tech and emerging industries. In 2018, the Ohio Business Roundtable, alongside other state business leaders including the Greater Cleveland Partnership, Cincinnati Business Committee and Columbus Partnership, created Ohio Excels, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving and transforming Ohio's education system. Through Ohio Excels, we are focused on enhancing K-12 literacy and math proficiency, increasing career-connected learning opportunities, broadening school choice, making post-secondary education more accessible, and up-skilling workers for technology-driven careers. We need to ensure Ohioans are prepared for well-paying jobs in high-demand fields, including STEM and AI-related industries.

Innovation: Turning Ideas into Economic Growth

For Ohio to thrive in the innovation economy, we must bridge the gap between research and economic impact. While our state's R&D activity is on par with national trends, we lag in converting innovation into economic value. The Ohio Business Roundtable supports strengthened investments in innovation hubs, public-private partnerships, and commercialization programs to help scale startups, attract corporate R&D, and foster breakthrough technologies.

The Time Is Now

While Ohio's economy is surging, we cannot take this success for granted. According to census maps available through the Ohio Department of Development, our state has faced decades of population stagnation and slow GDP growth, also resulting in the loss of Congressional representation in every census for 60 years. Though recent economic wins signal positive change, we must take proactive steps to sustain this trajectory.

We are at a defining moment—one where decisive action can cement Ohio's standing as a leader in economic development and job creation. By addressing



issues such as energy reliability, workforce preparedness, housing availability, and innovation-driven growth, we can ensure a prosperous future for all Ohioans.

The Ohio Business Roundtable looks forward to working with Committee members this General Assembly in the budget process and beyond to champion these priorities. Now is the time to act.

I would be happy to answer any questions at this time. My contact information is also available through the Chair if anyone would like to set up a follow-up discussion or connect with our team further. Thank you for your time this morning.

