

**TESTIMONY OF DAVID COLE
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*Proponent Testimony – House Bill 284
June 18, 2025***

Chairman, Vice Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the House Development Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 284. I would also like to thank Representatives Hiner and White for being the primary sponsors of this legislation and all of the cosponsors for putting their support behind House Bill 284.

The Ductile Iron Pipe Research Association (DIPRA) is a 100 year-old organization that represents the domestic manufacturers of Ductile Iron Pipe. Ductile Iron Pipe is used for water and wastewater infrastructure. It is used in water systems from coast to coast.

In fact, I am pleased to say that here in Ohio, 32 utilities are members of the DIPRA Century Club – these are utilities that have Iron water mains that have been in use over 100 years. Two utilities – Cincinnati and Columbus – are members of our Sesquicentennial Club recognizing at least 150 years of Iron Pipe service. The member companies of this Association are proud of the continued relationships with these and many other utilities that rely upon Ductile Iron Pipe to reliably and responsibly serve the people of Ohio. We are also proud that our member company, McWane Ductile, manufactures Ductile Iron Pipe in Coshocton, Ohio.

On behalf of DIPRA and its members, I would like to express our strong support of H.B. 284 and respectfully encourage the members of this Committee to support it. House Bill 284 is a common-sense measure that prioritizes Ohio's and America's industrial base. Ohio has had a long-standing preference for domestic steel products. This bill expands that preference to include iron, and it is modeled after similar American Iron and Steel legislation (or AIS legislation) that has passed Congress and several states.

Enacting a preference for the use of American Iron and Steel in state-funded infrastructure, building, and utility projects, would achieve several vital objectives:

1. Bolstering Ohio's Manufacturing Sector and Creating Jobs:

This bill will directly stimulate demand for American-made iron and steel, leading to increased production at mills and fabrication plants across Ohio and the nation. This increased activity translates directly into good-paying jobs for Ohioans in manufacturing, transportation, and related industries. It provides stability and growth opportunities for companies that have invested in American facilities and employed American workers.

2. Strengthening Domestic Supply Chains and National Security:

Relying on foreign sources for critical infrastructure materials like iron and steel creates vulnerabilities in our supply chains, especially during times of global disruption or geopolitical tension. By securing a domestic supply for our infrastructure projects, we enhance our economic resilience and national security. We ensure that Ohio's vital infrastructure is built with materials whose origin and quality we can verify and control.

3. Promoting Economic Multipliers and Local Investment:

When state funds are used to purchase American-made products, those dollars are recirculated within our own economy. The wages earned by American workers are spent in American communities, supporting local businesses and generating tax revenue that can be reinvested in our state. This creates a powerful economic multiplier effect that benefits all Ohioans.

4. Ensuring Quality and Accountability:

American iron and steel producers operate under stringent quality control standards and environmental regulations. By requiring American Iron and Steel, we can have greater confidence in the quality, durability, and safety of our state-funded projects. Furthermore, it allows for greater accountability, as we can more easily address any issues or concerns with domestically sourced products.

5. Aligning with American Iron and Steel (AIS) Principles:

House Bill 284 aligns Ohio with the successful AIS provisions at the federal level, which have long recognized the strategic importance of domestic sourcing for public projects. AIS Principles have functioned successfully at the federal level for well over a decade, and this bill includes the necessary requirements and waivers to make Ohio's AIS program a success too. Notably, the bill includes reasonable provisions for waivers in cases of unavailability or unreasonable cost, ensuring flexibility while maintaining the core principle of domestic preference. Being aligned with federal AIS principles will make it easier for Ohio to implement and enforce its domestic preference, and it reinforces a national commitment to supporting American manufacturing.

In conclusion, House Bill 284 is an investment in Ohio's and America's future. It is an investment in our workers, our industries, and our economic independence. I urge the committee to give this vital legislation your favorable consideration and to send a clear message that Ohio is committed to building its future with American-made strength.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.