



# Ohio Contractors Association

## Ohio House Public Insurance and Pensions Committee House Bill 32, Interested Party Testimony

**Presented by Chris Runyan, President,  
Ohio Contractors Association (OCA)  
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Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Teska, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House Public Insurance and Pensions Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as an interested party on House Bill 321. My name is Chris Runyan, and I am the President of the Ohio Contractors Association. Our 200 contractor members build Ohio's highway, bridge, water and sewer systems and other critical infrastructure facilities.

As you consider making changes to Ohio's unemployment compensation system, I must ask that you consider the unique nature of the heavy/highway industry. Our construction workforce is highly trained and skilled and yet very much subject to Ohio's climatic conditions. Whether union or open shop, our employees are trained in specific duties not only in what they do, but how they stay safe going about those tasks. This training is paid for by the employer, in the form of fringe funds directed towards a union apprenticeship program or employer provided training.

As I'm sure you realize, weather conditions restrict how and when outside construction work can be performed. Many key tasks such as paving, concrete placement, and excavation are impossible, and in some cases contractually prohibited, during certain times of the year and under certain weather conditions.

Another complexity our members face is the transient nature of construction work. It is not unusual for a craftsperson to work for one contractor for a brief period of time and, when their skills are no longer needed on a project, or the project is completed, they return to the union hall to await a new assignment.

During seasonal shutdowns or times between project assignments, unemployment compensation is a key part in keeping those workers engaged in our industry for the practical sake of providing for themselves and their families. It is, also, a critical safety net when recruiting and retaining a future workforce. A career in construction is physically demanding and environmentally challenging. The guarantee of income during downtimes provides a level of stability making construction a palatable career path.



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A skilled construction worker is not abusing the system when they are laid off for seasonal conditions. Neither is a construction employer reaping the value of that trained employee benefit by keeping a worker on unemployment. Unemployment is a bridge to keep the individual engaged in this career so they can pay the bills until the next season begins.

As you explore options to improve the solvency of Ohio's unemployment compensation system, we urge you to keep in mind the unique challenges of the construction industry. We remain committed to being a part of this discussion.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and I would be happy to answer your questions.

