



**HOUSE PUBLIC INSURANCE & PENSIONS COMMITTEE
HOUSE BILL 321, INTERESTED PARTY TESTIMONY**

**Provided by Andrea Ashley, Vice President of Government Relations,
Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Ohio**

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Teska, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the Public Insurance and Pensions Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer AGC of Ohio's testimony today as an interested party on House Bill 321.

The Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Ohio is a statewide organization made up of both union and open shop contractors — large and small — who build Ohio's commercial and industrial infrastructure. That includes everything from schools and hospitals to water treatment plants, warehouses, and manufacturing facilities.

As you weigh changes to Ohio's unemployment compensation system, we ask that you also consider how those changes could affect the construction industry — especially when it comes to recruiting and keeping the skilled workforce we need.

Construction isn't like most other industries. Our work is heavily dependent on weather and economic cycles. A lot of what we build happens outdoors, and in Ohio, that means projects often slow down — or shut down — in the winter. On top of that, construction usually feels the impact of economic downturns later than other sectors, but it also takes longer for us to recover. This creates a lot of unpredictability in employment patterns.

At the same time, this work is physically and mentally demanding. Tradespeople are out the door before sunrise, working long days in extreme heat, cold, and everything in between. They're lifting, climbing, operating heavy equipment — all while staying alert to the risks that come with busy, often hazardous job sites. They're juggling deadlines, coordinating with multiple trades, and pushing through fatigue to keep projects on schedule and up to standard.

That's where the unemployment compensation system becomes so important. When work slows due to no fault of their own, it gives these workers a lifeline — a way to support their families, pay their bills, and be ready to return to the job when the next project starts. For many contractors, having access to a reliable, experienced workforce depends on this safety net being there when it's needed.



When surveyed, construction employers consistently identify workforce recruitment and retention as a top concern. More skilled workers are retiring than entering the industry, creating a growing gap that threatens project timelines and capacity. Meanwhile, Ohio is experiencing extraordinary growth—transformative projects like Intel, Anduril, and the expanding network of data centers are laying the foundation for long-term prosperity. But that future hinges on our ability to build and sustain a strong construction workforce. Without the skilled tradespeople to bring these projects to life, Ohio risks losing these opportunities to other states—and with them, the chance to secure a brighter future.

As you look for ways to improve the system’s long-term solvency, we urge you to be mindful of the construction industry’s unique conditions. We don’t want to see changes that unintentionally make it even harder to bring people into the trades or keep them there — especially at a time when skilled labor is already in short supply.

We appreciate the hard work that’s taken place and the broader effort to strengthen Ohio’s economy. We believe there’s a balanced path forward — one that protects both the unemployment system and the industries that depend on it.

Thank you again for your time, and we look forward to continuing the conversation.