



HOUSE PUBLIC INSURANCE & PENSIONS COMMITTEE

HB 321: Interested Party Testimony (written only)

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

As this committee and other stakeholders work toward ensuring the long-term solvency of Ohio's unemployment compensation system, we respectfully ask that you consider how potential changes could affect construction employers' ability to attract and retain a skilled workforce.

Our organizations — Ohio Contractors Association, Associated General Contractors of Ohio, Flexible Pavements of Ohio, Mechanical Contractors Association of Ohio, Ohio Roofing Contractors Association, Ohio chapters of the National Electrical Contractors Association, and the Construction Employers Association — collectively represent more than 1,000 union and open shop commercial contractors across Ohio. Together, these employers provide jobs to tens of thousands of skilled tradespeople and are responsible for building a broad range of nonresidential projects—both vertical and horizontal—including roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, wastewater treatment facilities, and industrial and energy infrastructure.

The construction industry is a critical driver of Ohio's economy. Contractors build and maintain the infrastructure that supports commerce, public health, manufacturing, and community development. However, construction is also a uniquely seasonal and cyclical industry. Work is limited during Ohio's harsh winters, with many projects delayed until spring. For example, vertical construction groundbreakings rarely happen in winter months, and ODOT's construction program essentially pauses during that time. In addition, economic downturns hit our industry hard, with construction investment typically trailing broader economic recovery by one to three years.

Like other skilled trades, construction employers already face significant workforce challenges. Recruiting and retaining workers is an ongoing concern, and the industry's seasonal nature adds to that difficulty. We urge the committee to avoid changes that may inadvertently discourage people from pursuing or remaining in construction careers, or that could drive skilled laborers to leave the state.

We acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of the General Assembly and the Administration to improve Ohio's economic climate and workforce development. We believe it is possible to advance thoughtful reforms that put the unemployment compensation system on a sustainable path while also addressing the legitimate needs of an industry vital to the state's long-term growth and prosperity.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with legislators and stakeholders to ensure that solvency solutions support both system stability and workforce strength in Ohio's construction sector.