

**Written Testimony Provided by**  
**Ms. Kimberly Gibson, Industrial Base Integration Director, America Makes**  
**on House Bill 332**  
**Proponent Testimony | October 14, 2025**

Chair Ghanbari, Ranking Member Upchurch and Members of the Small Business Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony on House Bill 332, legislation that creates the *Small Defense Business Linked Deposit Program*.

My name is Kimberly Gibson, and I serve as the Industrial Base Integration Director at America Makes, the nation's leading public-private partnership for additive manufacturing funded by the U.S. Department of Defense, through a Cooperative Agreement with the Air Force Research Laboratory in Dayton, Ohio. Chartered by Congress in 2012, the Manufacturing USA network of innovation institutes was born from a vision seeded by two Ohio institutions, Battelle and EWI (formerly Edison Welding Institute), and championed by Ohio's Senate delegation.

As the flagship institute for this national network, America Makes was established to strengthen the U.S. industrial base by developing advanced manufacturing technologies, building a skilled workforce, and enhancing supply-chain resilience. Based in Youngstown, Ohio, America Makes works to accelerate the adoption of additive and advanced manufacturing across defense, aerospace, and other critical sectors. We believe that investments in manufacturing are investments in both national and economic security.

Today, America Makes serves over 300 member organizations nationwide, of which more than 60 are Ohio-based manufacturers, research institutions, and small businesses. Across this network, a common theme has emerged: access to affordable capital remains one of the greatest challenges limiting small and mid-sized manufacturers from scaling production capacity, adopting new technologies, and competing for defense contracts.

Ohio's defense industrial base is vital to both our state's economic strength and our nation's security. Yet for many small firms, rising interest rates and constrained credit markets have limited the ability to invest in new equipment, expand facilities, and modernize operations. For many of these companies, access to affordable financing is the difference between maintaining the status quo and achieving meaningful growth.

By partnering with local lending institutions, House Bill 332 provides a practical, targeted solution to empower manufacturers to invest in modernization, increase capacity, and strengthen the defense supply chain while ensuring that the resources reach the small firms most critical to our defense ecosystem through its eligibility criteria. Importantly,

participating borrowers must certify that loan proceeds will be used exclusively within Ohio to create and retain jobs, strengthen infrastructure, and enhance production capabilities.

By lowering financing costs and unlocking access to capital, HB 332 enables Ohio's small defense businesses to modernize, hire, and innovate, reinforcing both the resilience of our industrial base and Ohio's leadership in defense manufacturing.

Earlier this year, America Makes was awarded the fourth and final Innovation Hub designation from the State of Ohio, the *Youngstown Innovation Hub for Aerospace and Defense*. This designation reflects the state's commitment to strengthening Ohio's role in the national defense ecosystem and advancing technologies that bolster supply-chain readiness.

The framework established by HB 332 directly complements this mission. By addressing the financing gap that hinders small defense manufacturers, the program enhances Ohio's ability to translate innovation into capacity growth. Through initiatives like this, a small machining company could invest in next-generation additive manufacturing equipment, a precision fabricator could upgrade its cybersecurity infrastructure to meet CMMC requirements, or a tooling manufacturer could expand capacity to meet Department of Defense surge demands.

Each of these examples demonstrates how targeted access to affordable capital strengthens not just individual companies, but the broader industrial base that supports our nation's security.

HB 332 builds upon other state and federal initiatives, such as the Ohio Innovation Hub designations, the Manufacturing Extension Partnership network, and the Defense Manufacturing Community programs, creating a coordinated industrial base that leverages both public and private capital to drive growth.

By focusing specifically on *small and mid-sized enterprises*, the bill recognizes that the strength of our industrial base lies not just in large primes, but in the thousands of Ohio suppliers who make up the backbone of the defense economy. For many companies, this legislation could be the difference between standing still and moving forward.

On behalf of America Makes and our national network of industry, academic, and government partners, I strongly support House Bill 332 and urge its swift passage. Thank you for the opportunity to share insights on this important issue.