BEFORE THE HOUSE TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

REPRESENTATIVE THADDEUS J. CLAGGETT, CHAIRMAN

TESTIMONY OF

JEFF SPAIN, MEP AT COLUMBUS STATE

ERICK JENKUSKY, T.J. CLARK INTERNATIONAL, LLC

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Manufacturing Technologies Assistance Program Testimony

Chair Claggett, Vice-Chair Workman, Ranking Minority Member Ismail Mohamed, and members of the House Technology and Innovation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 159, creating the manufacturing technology assistance program that will provide Ohio's small and medium-sized manufacturers with the resources, technical assistance, and access to cutting-edge technologies, as well as workforce training to modernizing their facilities and machinery.

My name is Jeff Spain, and I represent the MEP at Columbus State as a proud partner of the Ohio Manufacturers' Association. MEP at Columbus State is both a regional partner of the Ohio Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) and a member of the Central Ohio Manufacturing Partnership-Industry Sector Partnership (ISP). Working in concert with Columbus State Community College, we support an essential piece of Ohio's manufacturing ecosystem.

MEPs help Ohio's small and medium-sized manufacturers increase sales, create jobs, and generate cost savings through technological innovation, workforce training, and improved management practices.

ISPs help fund collaboration between businesses, education and training providers, and other community leaders invested in improving their region's workforce. These collaborations create a more skilled workforce and benefit both Ohioans and Ohio's job creators.

Columbus State Community College is central Ohio's workforce partner, working shoulder-to-shoulder with employers to address the region's talent needs. The college offers bachelor's degrees, associate degrees, and a variety of workforce credentials that provide opportunities for Ohio families to obtain good jobs and advance in their careers. Columbus State provides the subject matter expertise to train Central Ohio's emerging and incumbent workforce needed to thrive within modern manufacturing facilities.

As you know, small and medium-sized manufacturing companies are critical to Ohio, representing 90% of job growth for high-paying jobs. For every new manufacturing job that is created or retained, three to five supporting jobs are also created. According to research from One Columbus, the ratio is even higher at 1 to 7.5 jobs in durable goods manufacturing and 1 to 9 jobs in semiconductor manufacturing.

Investing in this space is critical to Ohio's future.

The Manufacturing Technology Assistance Grant Program (MTAP) will provide eligible manufacturers with fewer than 500 employees the opportunity to receive grant funding of up to $150,000, contingent upon a 1:1 match of public and private funds, ensuring applicant manufacturers have a direct financial stake in equipment upgrades and smart technology integration.

Through collaboration with Manufacturing Extension Partnerships (MEPs) like ours in Central Ohio, the MTAP will offer manufacturers access to expert guidance, further bolstering their ability to navigate the complexities of technology integration. In the past five years, the MEP at Columbus State has served 80 manufacturers in Central Ohio, helping those companies achieve the following results:

- $82.4 million in increased/retained sales
- $33 million in cost savings
- $83.8 million of investment in their operations
- Create or retain 2,077 manufacturing jobs

Much of the MEP at Columbus State's work is focused on helping manufacturers implement Industry 4.0 and advanced technologies. A few recent examples include:

- **AMG Industries, LLC** (Mount Vernon, OH) AMG was founded in 1904. In 1972, AMG officially entered the automotive market, and the first decorative exhaust assemblies were provided to the Cadillac Motor Car Division. Today, AMG's Mount Vernon, Ohio, business continues to supply the automotive arena, working closely on engineering and design for manufacturability with OEMs and Tier 1s. Current OEMs include Ford Motor Car Company, Honda Automotive, Mack Trucks, Kenworth, and Toyota.

  Workforce and productivity challenges prompted AMG to explore ways to bring advanced automation into production. AMG Industries identified a specific part, an exhaust tip, that was experiencing production challenges and was comprised of a highly repetitive task. As a part of the **Ohio MEP** and the **MEP National Network™**, the MEP at Columbus State purchased a collaborative robot that we use to provide manufacturers with on-site, short-term research and development tests of robots in specific workplaces. Upon hearing about this MEP service, the AMG Company leadership (Director of Engineering & CEO) voiced a desire to test a UR robot.

  MEP engineers and MEP automation Subject Matter Experts came on-site, observed the production process, and worked with the AMG Industries

engineering team to install and program a collaborative robot. After a few trial runs, the robot took the lead in production with stunning results. Productivity was up 38% (averaging 276 parts an hour versus 200 manually). Additionally, the company was able to redeploy and upskill the workers in other areas to address the ongoing workforce needs.

The result was a 38% increase in parts per hour and a $50,000 purchase of a UR10E collaborative robot from Allied Automation in Columbus, Ohio.

- **Pinnacle Metal Products** provides design, fabrication, and installation services for miscellaneous steel for the construction industry. It is a family-owned, single-location business located in Columbus, Ohio.

  Over the company's lifetime, the business owner has implemented incremental technological improvements to the manufacturing facility to improve safety and throughput. However, the limited amount of time available to research and implement new technologies has constrained the company's efforts. MEP at Columbus State was brought in to take on this challenge.

  To resolve the challenge, the MEP at Columbus State developed a comprehensive automation plan, focusing on modular solutions that could be implemented across multiple process areas. To determine where opportunities were present, the existing processes were documented and analyzed for opportunities for improvement. A comprehensive user requirement document was generated for each identified opportunity to then request proposals from specific automation and material handling solution providers. Using this information, a comprehensive plan was developed to summarize the automation solutions throughout the facility and develop the business case.

  The results showed a 33% increase in paint drying time and improved ergonomics and safety in each process area.

- **Columbus State Community College** has a long history of working with industry to support the professional development needs of the Central Ohio workforce. A recent example is an apprenticeship program created for **Amgen Ohio**. The program included 160 hours of non-credit training through the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) at Columbus State. The apprenticeship also included 16 college credit hours in the Autumn Semester of 2023, followed by one year of on-the-job training at Amgen. The topics taught during the apprenticeship program included skills to work within an Industry 4.0

automated facility. As part of Amgen's recently announced $900 million expansion, the company committed to extending its training partnership with Columbus State.

Every month, the MEP at Columbus State interacts with Ohio's small and medium-sized manufacturers that would greatly benefit from projects like the ones referenced.

Drawing inspiration from successful initiatives in neighboring states like Iowa and Indiana, MTAP has the potential to catalyze transformative growth and innovation across Ohio's manufacturing landscape.

I appreciate your consideration of this program. I would now like to hand it over to my colleague – Eric Jenkusky to provide his testimony from the manufacturers' perspective.

Chairman Claggett, and members of the House Technology and Innovation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 159.

In addition to my support for the legislation, I would also like to quickly mention my support for the MEP program at Columbus State, which our company has benefited from as a continued customer of their services.

My name is Eric Jenkusky, and I represent T.J. Clark International LLC as a member of the Ohio Manufacturers' Association.

T.J. Clark International LLC, located in Delaware, Ohio, is a family-owned company founded in 2015, currently employing 16 highly skilled employees. We design and manufacture the leading tactical fuel and water pump and distribution systems for the US Department of Defense and allied nation militaries to enable contested logistics in multi-domain operations.

MTAP represents a crucial opportunity to empower Ohio's small to mid-size manufacturers to thrive in an increasingly competitive global market. By providing grants for the adoption and integration of smart technologies, this program will not only drive operational improvements but also ensure the long-term sustainability of our manufacturing sector.

For our company, MTAP would assist us in the acquisition of game-changing manufacturing technologies to enhance operational efficiencies. MTAP is especially

timely and impactful following the issuance of **Executive Order 14265—Modernizing Defense Acquisitions and Spurring Innovation in the Defense Industrial Base**—signed by President Trump on April 9, 2025. EO 14265 aims to accelerate the modernization of the U.S. defense industrial base by encouraging rapid adoption of advanced technologies and streamlining procurement processes. However, without direct support for small to mid-size manufacturers, many companies could struggle to meet the evolving demands of defense procurement.

MTAP directly aligns with the goals of EO 14265 by empowering Ohio manufacturers to rapidly adopt and integrate cutting-edge manufacturing technologies, enhancing their ability to compete for defense contracts. This program not only strengthens the state's defense manufacturing capacity but also ensures that Ohio's small to mid-size manufacturers can contribute to our nation's collective defense through innovation and modernization. For our company in particular MTAP would allow us to enhance our manufacturing with modern CNC Plasma Metal Cutting and Rapid Metallic 3D Printing Prototyping capabilities respectively.

With an initial funding allocation of $12,000,000, this program will enable small defense equipment manufacturers like us to thrive in today's dynamic global business environment, maintain Ohio's position as a frontrunner in manufacturing technologies and assist our Nation in re-establishing our defense industrial base.

We urge your support for this proposal, recognizing its significance in driving economic competitiveness, fostering innovation, and ensuring the continued success of Ohio's largest industry - manufacturing.

We are thankful to Representatives Demetriou and Santucci for sponsoring this legislation and their continued support for our industry.

Members of the committee, thank you for your time today, we are happy to answer any questions you may have about this proposal or our organizations.