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Matthew Kishman
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RE: HB 349 – Consumer Protection Call Center Act

Chairman Claggett, Vice Chair Workman, Ranking Member Mohamed, and members of the House Technology & Innovation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 349, the Consumer Protection Call Center Act.

House Bill 349 is about protecting Ohio jobs, safeguarding taxpayer dollars, and ensuring accountability when companies benefit from public resources. Too often, Ohio workers lose their jobs when corporations move call centers and customer service operations overseas, sometimes after receiving state incentives. This bill sets commonsense guardrails to prevent that from happening at the expense of our communities.

First, H.B. 349 requires employers who intend to relocate a call center or major operating unit to a foreign country to provide the Department of Job and Family Services with at least 120 days' notice. This transparency gives workers, local leaders, and the state time to prepare for the potential impact. Employers that fail to provide notice are subject to penalties.

Second, the bill directs the Department of Job and Family Services to maintain a public list of companies that have offshored call centers. Employers on this list will be ineligible for state grants, loans, tax benefits, or other economic incentives for five years. Furthermore, if such a company has already received incentives, it must repay the unamortized value of those benefits. This ensures taxpayer dollars are not subsidizing the offshoring of Ohio jobs.

Third, H.B. 349 requires state agencies to keep their own call center and customer service work in Ohio. If the state is paying for these services, they should be creating and supporting jobs here at home, not overseas.

Finally, the bill includes flexibility through a waiver process. If disqualifying an employer from incentives would cause substantial job loss in Ohio, harm the environment, or significantly damage the state's economy, the Department of Development may grant an exemption.

House Bill 349 strikes a balance between holding companies accountable and preserving Ohio's economic interests. It promotes fair competition, supports working families, and ensures state resources are used to strengthen, and not weaken, our economy.

I respectfully ask for your favorable consideration of H.B. 349. I am happy to take any questions.