

Proponent Testimony for House Bill 650 (Frontier Technologies and Quantum Computing Commission)

By Kirk Herath,

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Chair Claggett, Vice Chair Workman, Ranking Member Workman, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 650, introduced by State Representative Heidi Workman.

I have been involved in technology law, public policy, and operations for almost 40 years. I have experience in both the private and public sectors, including over three decades at Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company, as the Technology Legal practice group leader, consulting and teaching and, most recently, as the top cybersecurity leader in the State of Ohio. I have also been teaching this subject at both the Ohio State University and Cleveland State University Law Schools for the past five years.

House Bill 650 proposes the creation of the Frontier Technologies and Quantum Computing Commission, a bipartisan body tasked with studying and advancing emerging technologies that will define economic competitiveness, public safety, and national security in the decades ahead. These technologies, including artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum computing, and robotics, and their impact on cybersecurity and data privacy, are no longer theoretical or distant. They are already reshaping how governments operate, how businesses compete, and how citizens live and work.

The purpose of HB 650 is both practical and forward-looking. Ohio has long been a leader in manufacturing, research, defense, healthcare, and logistics. Those strengths position the state exceptionally well to benefit from frontier technologies—but only if we act deliberately and strategically. Without coordinated study and planning, Ohio risks falling behind other states and nations that are already investing heavily in these areas.

The Commission established by HB 650 would provide Ohio with a structured, bipartisan forum to:

- Assess the economic opportunities and workforce impacts of emerging technologies.
- Identify risks related to privacy, ethics, and cybersecurity.
- Evaluate how quantum computing and advanced AI may affect critical infrastructure, defense, healthcare, and financial systems.
- Recommend policies that encourage innovation while safeguarding Ohioans' rights and security; and
- Coordinate efforts across academia, industry, and government to avoid fragmented or duplicative initiatives.

Importantly, HB 650 does not attempt to prematurely regulate technologies that are still evolving. Instead, it emphasizes study, expertise, and preparedness. This approach recognizes that informed policymaking requires technical understanding and sustained engagement with subject matter experts. A standing commission allows Ohio to develop that understanding proactively rather than reacting to developments after the fact. It also allows us to build a framework for how to

The bipartisan nature of the proposed Commission is also essential. Frontier technologies do not belong to one political party or ideology. Their benefits and risks affect every Ohioan—urban and rural, public, and private sector alike. HB 650 ensures that recommendations are based in broad consensus and long-term state interests rather than short-term political considerations. We must first identify real problems, determine whether existing law exists to solve those problems, and then identify solutions to fill in legal gaps.

Finally, this legislation sends a clear signal that Ohio intends to compete—and lead—in the next generation of technological advancement. By investing in thoughtful analysis today, Ohio can attract research institutions, employers, and federal partnerships tomorrow, while ensuring that innovation proceeds responsibly and securely.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support House Bill 650 and advance it for further consideration. It is a thoughtful first step to identifying the right problems and solutions. Thank you for your time and your commitment to Ohio's future.