Chairman Wilson, Vice Chair Lang, Ranking Member Craig, and Members of the Committee:

Statement of Interest.

Ohio Jewish Communities is the statewide government advocacy, public affairs, and community relations voice of our eight Jewish federations and their 150 community, cultural, social, and human services agencies on the front lines helping Ohioans of every faith – and of none – every day. We submit this testimony on their behalf as well.

We are grateful to Sen. Schaffer for leading on this. In the past few weeks, we have been in the House Development Committee testifying in support of several international trade bills, one by Reps. Hall and Synenberg – which has a Senate companion by Sens. Brenner and Weinstein, and the other by Reps. Mathews and Santucci. In both cases we spoke not just about trade and partnerships in the traditional sense, but also regarding workforce development. The legislation before you today can offer a beta test if you will.

Trained Cybersecurity Professionals No Longer a Luxury

The number of cybersecurity incidents impacting local governments, school districts, hospitals, and more continues to increase. And we can predict, without much effort, that trend is going to continue. One report indicates that Israel is facing a 700% surge in cyber-attacks in the last week.

As Ohio's innovation economy continues to make the state ground zero for advanced technology, from unmanned systems to space travel, and from semiconductors to defensetech, the state will face more cyberattacks. There will also be an increasing need for a trained cyber workforce, both in government and the private sector.

The bill before you answers part of that problem. Every local government should have a cyber defense program that is best-in-class. Bad actors breaching a local government could access personal information, sensitive information in the form of industrial or corporate espionage, and even information that can be used to plot terror attacks. If Ohio wants to remain on the list for many businesses looking to establish themselves or expand in the US, and as a rising location for foreign direct investment; they will need the cybersecurity programs and the workforce to ensure they can be deployed.

That's where legislation like this plays such an important role.

But one small, key change to this bill would help that. Ensure a very modest amount of funding – in the $30,000 - $60,000 range - to fund training for staff that will need to do the day-to-day work of defending Ohio's local governments. This will also serve as a pilot for both private sector opportunities for such workforce development, and, depending on the partners used to provide such training, showcase how Ohio will gain from more international trade and international collaboration.

Bringing workers to Ohio as well as training Ohioans

Finally, this will help to potentially create more taxpaying roles both for teachers and course instructors here in Ohio, but also, if successful, in Ohio's cyber workforce more broadly.

Why Now?

Now is the time to push hard for innovation partnerships. But that makes Ohio's cyber posture equally critical. Demonstrating clear market demand and providing a pathway for cybersecurity companies as well as those industries and bellwether companies reliant on such security is good for Ohio's future. It will help attract more innovation leaders here, and help them strike deeper roots.

Next Steps

We hope we can move this bill quickly, including, if necessary based on the testimony you'll hear, to amend it slightly. We ask that you continue this committee process, and as soon as possible, report the bill out favorably. There are a lot of jobs depending on it.

I'm happy to take questions. Thank you again for your time.

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