

Testimony Against Senate Bill 88
Submitted by: Su He
Greater Cleveland Chinese Chamber of Commerce
Testifying as Opponent

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Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and esteemed members of the Senate General Government Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify against Senate Bill 88. My name is Su He. I am a licensed attorney in both Ohio and New York, and residing in Solon, Ohio. As a business immigration attorney, I have provided legal services to hundreds of immigrants, families, and companies from around the world, helping them settle, live, and thrive in Ohio and across the United States. I also serve as the Executive Director of the Greater Cleveland Chinese Chamber of Commerce ("Cleveland Chinese Chamber"), where our team help Chinese investors understand Ohio's business environment, promote foreign direct investment, especially in manufacturing in Northeast Ohio ("NEO"); support local companies exploring opportunities in China; and build bridges for local Chinese and Asian entrepreneurs to the international business communities in NEO to connect, grow, and succeed.

Today, I respectfully express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 88. As a resident who deeply cares about Ohio's future and social justice, I believe this bill is deeply flawed on multiple levels, national security, constitutional rights, economic development, social cohesion, education, and immigration policies. It poses a threat not only to Asian professionals like me who have long called Ohio home, but to the entire state's social fabric, economic growth, and international reputation.

1. SB 88 Threatens Jobs and Local Manufacturing

Our Chamber has long partnered with local governments and development agencies to bring foreign direct investment to Northeast Ohio, especially in advanced manufacturing. But I must be frank, if this bill passes, it will directly undo years of effort.

Just two weeks ago, I attended SelectUSA, the largest investment summit hosted by the U.S. Department of Commerce. In past years, I proudly promoted Ohio to international entrepreneurs. This year, I could not. Everyone was aware of SB 88 and HB 1. These bills send a clear message: "Ohio does not welcome you." Not only have Chinese businesses taken notice, Taiwanese companies have expressed serious concern as well. Over 170 Taiwanese delegates attended the summit, and many asked me: "We look the same as mainland Chinese. Will we be discriminated against in Ohio, too?"

Meanwhile, North Carolina's booth just a few steps away from the JobsOhio's booth was bustling with activity. I asked their economic development officers point-blank: "Do you discourage Chinese investors? Do you still offer incentives as the same?" They told me directly: "Yes, we treat all countries the same." North Carolina sent a clear message: "We welcome everyone."

Just last week, one of our clients told me that one potential candidate who was born in China has turned down job offers from Ohio companies because, as one put it, "I've heard about SB 88. I'm afraid I'll be discriminated against if I move there." That is real-time economic and talent loss.

Ohio has long been a hub for manufacturing and foreign investment, particularly from Chinese companies. As an attorney and Chamber leader, I've accompanied many companies and their CEOs from China during site visits, government meetings, and helping them establish operations here. I've seen firsthand the full process—from research, plant construction, equipment installation, to hiring local workers and integrating with communities. At least 43 Chinese-owned businesses operate in Ohio, most of them in manufacturing. Once operational, a single factory can create 50 to 200 local jobs. These companies typically invest upfront in land and equipment, without relying on U.S. financing, which is a true long-term commitment.

Take Fuyao Glass, the world's largest automotive glass manufacturer, as an example. Its U.S. headquarters is in Dayton, Ohio, employing over 2,000 local workers. Fuyao not only brought thousands of stable jobs to a city once devastated by GM's departure, but revived Dayton's manufacturing ecosystem. Property values doubled, business opportunities expanded, and the local community grew stronger. This is exactly what America's reshoring manufacturing strategy hopes to achieve.

SB 88 threatens to destroy all of this. It throws companies into uncertainty and panic, worried that executives or owners may be barred from owning property due to their nationality, concerned that millions or even billions in investments will be forced to be divested within two years, and that they will be labeled "foreign threats" despite operating lawfully.

If SB 88 becomes law, Ohio won't just lose companies that generate real jobs and taxes, it will lose thousands of families who depend on them. Local managers, workers, and staff will face layoffs. Communities will directly suffer from this. This bill doesn't just repel foreign investors, it abandons Ohio's future.

2. SB 88 Undermines Federal Industrial Policy and Sends the Wrong Message

According to U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Ohio ranks 7th in GDP among all 50 states, following California, Texas, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Florida. Ohio's economy is heavily supported by manufacturing, which accounted for about 15% of the state's GDP in 2023. In terms of manufacturing output, Ohio ranks 4th in the nation, behind only California, Texas, and Illinois.

While the federal government pushes to reshore manufacturing, Ohio should be leading efforts to attract international manufacturers, especially Chinese ones who have established matured manufacturing process and can bring their supply chains and capital to the state. But SB 88 would send a global message: "Foreign investors are not welcome in Ohio."

This doesn't just affect Chinese investors. Other Asian companies and talent will also feel targeted. SB 88 effectively erases Ohio from the global investment map. Meanwhile, states like Illinois and North Carolina are actively courting international capital. This is not a national security bill—it's a "closed for business" bill.

3. SB 88 Is Forcing Talent Out and Hurting Our Economic Future

Based on estimated data from universities' college factual and international affairs office, each year, around 10,000 Chinese students study in Ohio, contributing over \$570 million to the state's economy—\$380 million in tuition and \$190 million in living expenses. Ohio is home to top-tier institutions, including one of the nation's largest public universities, The Ohio State University ("OSU"), and many other world-renowned institutions. International students, especially from China, pay full tuition, helping support school operations and scholarships for domestic students. They are definitely a vital part of economic contributors.

At OSU, over 58% of international students come from China, making up about 5% of total enrollment. At Case Western Reserve University, there are over 1,370 Chinese students. If these students stop coming, we lose more than just tuition and rent—we lose future talent and innovation.

Many of these students stay after graduation under work visas like H-1B or O-1, becoming taxpayers, homeowners, and part of Ohio's professional workforce. Ohio approves roughly 12,000 H-1B applications each year, with nearly 1,800 from so-called "foreign adversary" countries. These workers generate \$186 million in wages annually, contributing \$5.7 million in state taxes. If this law passes, the state could lose nearly \$1 billion in wages and \$30 million in taxes in five years—or nearly \$2 billion and \$61 million in ten years.

These laws serve the pipeline from student to resident to citizen, we are driving away our future taxpayers and consumers.

In addition, Asian immigrants are not “taking” jobs—they are creating them. Ohio is home to over 9,500 Asian-owned businesses, employing nearly 97,600 people and generating \$3.3 billion in wages. Driving them out is driving out investment and growth.

4. SB 88 Fuels Fear and Divides the Asian American Community

I grew up in Beijing and moved to Ohio after graduating law school in China to pursue Master of Law and Juris Doctor degrees at Case Western Reserve University School of Law. I've now lived in Cleveland longer than I ever lived in Beijing. My entire career was built in Cleveland, Ohio. When people ask me where I'm from, I say: I'm a Clevelander!

I met my husband, also Chinese, while studying here. We bought our first home while he was under H-1B status, had our two children born in Cleveland. We later moved to a second home while we were in green cards to create a better life and study condition for my boys. We are a typical story of international students growing into middle-class Americans. There are thousands of families like ours across this state, people who work, pay taxes, and place their hopes for the next generation here.

Yet SB 88 sends a clear message: "You will always be a foreigner. Your contributions don't count. Your family is not welcome."

This bill has far-reaching consequences, not just for Chinese people, but for all Asian Americans. Ohio is home to over 600,000 immigrants, 63% of whom are Asian. Chinese Americans are the largest subgroup. They are teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, business owners, neighbors, colleagues, etc.

SB 88 turns them from “members of the community” into “potential threats.” It fosters fear, not safety. It marginalizes, labels, and segregates generations of Americans based on appearance and heritage.

5. True national security is not based on race

No one opposes national security. However, SB 88 dangerously oversimplifies complex threats by targeting individuals based on nationality and ethnicity. If the goal is to prevent espionage or security breaches, legislation must focus on behavior, and to everyone! Not broadly categorize entire communities by “foreign adversary” or by their place of birth or appearance.

The bill's vague and sweeping language casts suspicion on lawfully admitted visa holders, lawful residents, and even U.S. citizens of Asian descent. It effectively demands they “prove” their citizenship and innocence, despite their legal status and contributions to society. Should every person who looks Asian be required to carry their passport at all times to prove they are not a threat? How will officials distinguish Chinese from Taiwanese, Japanese, Korean Americans, or citizens of other Asian countries? How will they verify who holds a green card or citizenship? And how will we ensure that second-generation Asian Americans—born and raised in the U.S.—are not subjected to discrimination?

This is not security. This is racial profiling. It violates the Equal Protection Clause and insults every Asian American who calls this country home.

6. SB 88 Betrays Ohio's Core Values

Ohio is a state built on the values of hard work, fairness, and compassion. It plays a vital role in our nation's economy and political landscape. We are known for our Midwestern values—warmth, politeness, and a strong sense of community. Our people are neighborly, hardworking, and resilient.

SB 88 violates both the U.S. constitutional spirit, our legal principles and our values. It is a bill fueled by fear, misinformation, and political gamesmanship. If passed, it will brand Ohio as narrow-minded, exclusionary, and hostile—and that stigma could last for generations.

We cannot allow SB 88 to become a stain on Ohio's history. We must not use "security" as a pretext to suppress innocent residents, drive away talent, or harm our economy. We cannot let prejudice dictate the direction of our legislation.

I respectfully urge each of you to vote NO on SB 88—to uphold the spirit of the Constitution, to defend fairness and justice, and to protect the Ohio we all love.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Su He', with a stylized, cursive script.

Su He