Occupational Licensing Board Review Testimony
Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board

Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
March 25, 2026

Thank you, Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking member Weinstein and members of the Senate Government Oversite and Reform Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of the Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board. I am honored to have joining me today, our Executive Secretary, Carol Ross and our Administrative Chairman William Koester.

My name is Michael Baisden, I am the Program Administrator for the Board. The Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board ("Board") was established in 1993 to oversee the licensure of commercial specialty contractors. The specialty trades licensed by the Board include individuals working as a heating, ventilating, and air conditioning, refrigeration, plumbing, hydronics and electrical contractors. The primary goal and objective of the Board is to promote the safety of the public, those working in the specialty trades, as well as those working in the construction industry generally, by verifying that individuals working in the “licensed trades” have sufficient education, training, and experience to ensure that the work performed in these trades is done properly and competently.

The seventeen-member board issues approximately 15,200 licenses to specialty contractors working in the “licensed trades.” As part of its licensing function, the Board investigates complaints made against licensees as well as cases where an individual is performing work without the required license and, thereafter, conducting disciplinary proceedings should an infraction be found. The Board also approves and renews third-party, independent training agencies that offer continuing education programming for those licensed in the specialty trades, as well as approving the specific courses offered by these training agencies.

Although the Board is part of the operating function of the Ohio Department of Commerce’s Division of Industrial Compliance, the Board does have a dedicated staff of five office employees. The Board also shares responsibilities with other licensing and inspection service boards within the Department to increase efficiency and reduce indirect costs.

In order to obtain a license as a commercial contractor in the specialty trades, an applicant must apply to the board to be approved to sit for the exam. In order to be approved, a contractor

must show proof of: 1) a verified permit for each of the last 5 years, 2) a Journeyman's Card, 3) a Certificate of Completion of a State approved or US Department of Labor Apprenticeship OR 4) take 40 hours continuing education in code in the trade applied for.

The Board also considers Veterans who performed these duties in the military without submitting the above requirements – just a DD214 form describing their duties in the trade. These criteria strike the appropriate balance to ensure that applicants are competent to perform the work while not overly restricting the pool of available workers in the field. An applicant for licensure must also pay the applicable fees and pass the examination in their desired trade. The examination fee is $25, and the initial licensure fee is also $25. Licensees must pay a renewal fee of $60 per a one-year license renewal plus 8 hours continuing education, or $180 for a three-year renewal plus 24 hours continuing education and they must maintain at least $500,000 liability insurance.

In addition to licensing specialty contractors, the Board also approves and renews training agencies that offer continuing education programming for those licensed in the specialty trades, as well as approves the specific courses offered by these training agencies. Currently, the Board has approved 275 third-party independent training agencies. Each training agency pays an annual fee of $25 as well as $10 per course offered plus $1 per credit hour per attendee.

According to the National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies, 47 states license specialty trades like those trades subject to the Board's jurisdiction. Because other states are generally comparable to the amount of regulation exercised by the Board, the Board has entered into reciprocity agreements with 11 states that issue licenses in specialty trades, including Kentucky, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi, Virginia and Texas, with California coming soon.

In summary, the trades specifically regulated by the Board require exceptional levels of knowledge and expertise and the underlying works play a tremendous role in the overall safety of occupants of the regulated commercial projects. Our trades can blow up, burn down or flood a building and having minimum requirements to obtain licensure in the licensed trades helps to ensure that those working in those fields have sufficient education, training, and experience to perform such work competently and safely. Therefore, I ask you to please support the continued licensure under the Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board.

Chairwoman Manchester and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present information on this board, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.