

Prepared Testimony of Sarah Magruder Lyle, Executive Director, Damage
Prevention Action Center (DPAC)

On Behalf of DPAC members

Before Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee

Hearing on: House Bill 227: Relating to the time frame required for excavation
notification and other modifications to the excavation requirements.

November 4, 2025

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Senate Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in support of Representative Blasdel and Representative Johnson's bill HB 227.

My name is Sarah Magruder Lyle, and I am the Executive Director of the Damage Prevention Action Center (DPAC). I am also the President and CEO of the Common Ground Alliance (CGA).

DPAC's mission is to advocate for public policies and industry practices that protect underground utility infrastructure and those who work and live near these important assets. DPAC works to empower elected and public officials to safeguard their communities, improve worker safety and protect critical underground infrastructure by providing CGA's data-driven resources and consensus-based Best Practices in damage prevention.

The Damage Prevention Action Center applauds the Buckeye State's work to strengthen its damage prevention laws to protect underground utility lines and people who dig near them. DPAC supports policies that increase efficiency and consistency for locators and excavators across the country and that are in alignment with the Common Ground Alliance's Best Practices.

DPAC strongly believes that states must adopt comprehensive policies to modernize U.S. damage prevention industry by embracing innovation and technology to increase the resilience, safety and efficiency of our vast underground utility network. Such policies include:

- Effective, balanced enforcement for all stakeholders will drive behavior change.
- Removing special-interest exemptions for 811 notifications will reduce damages.
- Incentivize facility owner/operators to provide distributed real-time mapping and geospatial data to 811 centers in a timely fashion.
- Mandating reporting of all facility damages to the 811 center will provide additional information about how and why damages occur.
- Ensure laws allow effective implementation of CGA Best Practices.

DPAC commends Ohio's stakeholders for their collaborative work to modernize the state's damage prevention framework. Specifically, we applaud collaborative efforts to strengthen enforcement mechanisms and enhance training requirements, making key parts of the law more enforceable and ensuring that all parties have the knowledge and resources needed to prevent damages.

DPAC supports the changes in HB 227 that will ensure that all facility owners in the state participate in the 811 system. HB 227's revision of the definition of excavation helps move Ohio in the right direction by removing blanket exemptions and narrowing exempted activity. These provisions represent an important step forward in improving Ohio's damage prevention process and increasing confidence that the "one-call" 811 notification system will work for all stakeholders.

We also support HB 227's changes in the language regarding the notification of planned excavations. DPAC is working with stakeholders across the country to increase consistency in key requirements such as this. HB 227 changes the current requirements, which are 48 hours but not more than 10 working days before commencing excavation, to two working days, not including the day of the call, and the ten working days to sixteen calendar days. This revision is consistent with CGA's Best Practices, and the majority of states across the nation.

We truly appreciate your work to modernize Ohio's damage prevention laws. Thank you again for the opportunity to address the committee on this very important matter.