



November 5th, 2025
Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee
Chair Shane Wilkin
Proponent Testimony on Substitute House Bill 227
Jimmy Stewart-President Ohio Gas Association

Chair Wilkin, Vice-Chair Reineke, Ranking Member DeMora and members of the Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee, my name is Jimmy Stewart, and I am President of the Ohio Gas Association (OGA). The OGA is a natural gas trade association, and we represent over 35 natural gas distribution and transmission companies as well as cooperatives in Ohio.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Substitute House Bill 227 which updates and improves Ohio's underground damage prevention laws. This legislation is the result of nearly six years of discussions undertaken by the Ohio Underground Damage Prevention Coalition. The OUDPC was set up in 2011 and has worked to create and advocate for legislation to improve laws related to excavation. The Coalition is made up of experienced professionals from the entities involved in these activities such as contractors, natural gas utilities, electric utilities, telecommunications companies, county engineers, municipal governments, and several others. Ohio 811 is also engaged in all these discussions and serves as the Coalition's secretary. In other words, everyone has had a seat at the table and has had years to make their case.

OUDPC members work to build consensus among the entire group before sending it to the Ohio General Assembly for consideration. The language of Substitute HB 227 has been reviewed, discussed, and approved by the full OUDPC and its subcommittees made up of industry experts from across Ohio. The same was true of previous successful efforts, namely SB 378 sponsored by then State Senator Bill Coley which was passed and signed into law.

The natural gas industry views safety of our customers, employees, and the public to be our number one priority as we deliver reliable, inexpensive, domestic, and clean energy to millions of Ohioans each day. Our members have been part of regular OUDPC discussions over the years, and the Ohio Gas Association supports the passage Substitute House Bill 227 as a step forward in improving Ohio's damage prevention efforts.

An example is, ORC 3781.28 (A) Excavator Notifying protection service or pipeline owner:

- The recommended revisions written in this statute would change the utilities response time from an actual 48 hours to 2 working days not including the day of the call.
- This will provide the utilities and/or their agents the ability to better manage and locate their facilities in the time legislatively allotted to create a safer environment.
- Changing the mandated excavation start by date from 10 working days to 16 calendar days. This will provide clearer communication as the legal holidays schedule can cause confusion as can what classifies as a “working day”.

These commonsense provisions will help to create a safer work environment for all related parties.

We would like to recognize the successful efforts of State Representative Robb-Blasdel and Mark Johnson for sponsoring this legislation, along with the recent unanimous support of the Ohio House.

Members of the Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee- thank you for your time, consideration, and attention to this important issue and your commitment to improving public safety in Ohio.