



TESTIMONY

E-VERIFY WORKFORCE INTEGRITY

ACT

House Bill 246

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TESTIMONY BEFORE

OHIO SENATE

Senate Workforce Development Committee

TESTIMONY BY

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Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Senate Workforce Committee:

Good Afternoon. My name is Emily Moreno, and I serve as the Deputy Director of State Action and Executive Director of Ohio at the America First Policy Institute (AFPI). AFPI is a non-profit, non-partisan research institute dedicated to advancing policies that put the American people first, with guiding principles centered on liberty, free enterprise, national greatness, and the primacy of American workers, families, and communities.

I am here today to express AFPI's strong support for House Bill 246, the E-Verify Workforce Integrity Act. This important legislation would require nonresidential construction contractors, subcontractors, and labor brokers to use the federal E-Verify system—a free, web-based tool jointly administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration—to verify the employment eligibility of their employees. It also establishes clear enforcement mechanisms, including fines, disqualification from state contracts, and potential license revocations for violations, while providing safeguards against frivolous complaints and technical errors.

AFPI has long advocated for state-level policies that ensure a legal workforce, as outlined in our [State Legislative Priority on Ensuring a Legal Workforce](#). We believe states like Ohio can and should take proactive steps to combat illegal immigration. HB 246 aligns closely with our recommendations by mandating E-Verify in the nonresidential construction sector, an industry where unauthorized workers are often prevalent and can displace American citizens and legal residents in low-skill jobs.

Our support for this bill is rooted in several key benefits:

- **Deterring Illegal Immigration:** The primary driver of illegal immigration is the prospect of employment in the U.S. By requiring E-Verify, HB 246 removes this "jobs magnet" for unauthorized aliens. Mandatory verification significantly reduces their ability to secure work, which over time diminishes the incentive to enter or remain in the country unlawfully. This not only upholds the rule of law but also addresses the broader strain on public resources caused by illegal immigration.
- **Protecting American Workers and Boosting Wages:** With fewer unauthorized workers in the labor market, opportunities open up for American citizens and legal immigrants. Studies show that [illegals often compete in sectors like construction](#), suppressing wages and job availability for lawful residents. By ensuring only eligible individuals are hired, HB 246 helps get Ohioans back into the workforce and can lead to higher wages for legal workers. For instance, [nationwide data indicates that illegals comprise a significant portion of low-skill labor](#), directly impacting American families' economic security.
- **Promoting Fairness and Compliance in the Construction Industry:** The bill's targeted approach to nonresidential projects—such as buildings,



highways, bridges, and utilities—addresses a high-risk sector while exempting residential and agricultural uses. Its record-keeping requirements, complaint process handled by the Attorney General, and graduated penalties (starting at \$250 for initial verification failures and escalating for repeat offenses) encourage compliance without overburdening honest employers. Exceptions for previously verified employees and protections against race-based investigations further ensure the law is applied fairly.

Ohio's adoption of E-Verify in this critical industry would set a strong example, much like similar measures in states such as Arizona, Georgia, and Mississippi, which have seen reductions in unauthorized employment and benefits to local workers.

In conclusion, HB 246 is a commonsense measure that prioritizes Ohio's legal workforce, deters illegal activity, and safeguards taxpayer-funded projects. AFPI urges the committee to advance this bill swiftly to the full Senate for passage. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.

