



**BEFORE THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT AND AGENCY REVIEW COMMITTEE
OF THE OHIO SENATE
SENATOR KIRK SCHURING, CHAIRMAN**

**TESTIMONY
OF
ROB BRUNDRETT
DIRECTOR, PUBLIC POLICY SERVICES
THE OHIO MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Rob Brundrett. I am the Director of Public Policy Services for The Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on House Bill 308. The OMA was created in 1910 to advocate for Ohio's manufacturers; today, it has nearly 1,400 members. Its mission is to protect and grow Ohio manufacturing.

Manufacturing is the largest of the Ohio's 20 industry sectors and contributes more than \$112 billion annually in GDP, according to the most recent federal data. This comprises nearly 17% of the state's economic output. More than 700,000 Ohioans work in manufacturing. Ohio manufacturing employees earn, on average, more than \$61,500 in wages, according to newly released figures.

Throughout the years, the OMA has consistently advocated for an efficient and effective workers' compensation system that benefits workers, employers, and the economy of the state.

The Ohio workers' compensation system was designed to compensate injured workers' physical injuries/illnesses and any mental conditions that arise as a result of such physical injuries/illnesses. The OMA has historically opposed proposals that would permit PTSD compensation in cases in which there is no associated physical injury or illness. The adoption of a mental-only diagnosis would mark a significant change to the Ohio workers' compensation system.

As such, we are concerned about the potential expansion of workers' compensation beyond this provision's narrow target of first responders. We recognize that peace officers, firefighters, and emergency medical workers experience traumatic events. However, they are not alone in their willingness to undertake potentially dangerous and essential jobs. If we erode the physical injury requirement for peace officers, firefighters, and emergency medical workers, it will be difficult to justify not doing the same for other professions that seek equal treatment.

Once a fundamental parameter of the workers' compensation system – like the physical injury requirement – is compromised, the potential inroads into the program are endless. The result will be increased workers' compensation costs for public and private employers alike. The implications of those cost increases will be felt across the board and will impact Ohio's business climate. The increased costs could also affect our public employers' abilities to provide essential public safety functions.

Finally, given that mental health benefits have parity with physical health benefits under health insurance plans, it is important to have a broader conversation about where

PTSD arising apart from a workplace physical injury/illness is most effectively and appropriately financed – private health insurance, a special workers' compensation insurance PTSD fund outside of the current system – of which the OMA has been a vocal supporter, a specific government fund, a collectively bargained solution or something entirely different.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions from the committee.