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15th House District

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Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 534, our complimentary piece of legislation with HB 533. Both HB 533 and 534 aim to encourage good practices from state vendors and to add extra layers of accountability for vendors serving our constituents.

Currently, Ohio Revised Code allows the state to debar vendors for specified reasons and allows for temporary or permanent debarment. However, the state of Ohio rarely exercises this policy to deter fraudulent state vendors, and in some cases, have awarded state contracts subsequently after settling with unfaithful and fraudulent actors. Our proposed legislation would change the law to require debarment in cases where vendors intentionally defraud the state of Ohio, rather than just allow debarment and fail to prevent fraudulent vendor activity from continuing.

HB 534 would debar a vendor from consideration for contract awards upon a finding based upon a reasonable belief that the vendor has done any of the following:

1. Attempted to influence a public employee to breach ethical conduct standards or to influence a contract award;
2. Colluded to restrain competition by any means;
3. Been convicted under state or federal antitrust laws;
4. Been convicted under state or federal corruption laws;
5. Deliberately or willfully submitted false or misleading information regarding public contracts;
6. Admitted to a violation of embezzlement, forgery, falsification or destruction of records, receiving stolen property, and any other offense that directly reflects on the vendor's business integrity.

These common-sense reforms should already be in Ohio Revised Code. Such reforms would prevent corporations such as Centene, who have defrauded Ohio as well as 21 other states for tens of millions of dollars, from continuing to reap the benefits of state contracts. We cannot allow corporations with pay-to-play money to defraud our state, deny wrongdoing, and be subsequently gifted generous state contracts at the expense of those who rely on the state for transparency and sincerity.

In closing, HB 534 is a safeguard that puts the care and welfare of Ohioans at the forefront; not the corporations that profit and abuse their trust. We urge you to pass HB 533 and would be happy to field any questions you may have. Thank you.