

**Substitute Senate Bill 105 Proponent Testimony
House Economic and Workforce Development Committee
October 27, 2021**

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Upchurch, and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Substitute Senate Bill 105. I'm Katie Eagan, Vice President of Government Affairs at the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber.

The Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber represents nearly 4,000 businesses across Southwest Ohio, Southeast Indiana, and Northern Kentucky. Our work includes a commitment to grow and retain a 21st century workforce and stimulate economic development in our region with a vision for future growth. The Chamber is also home to the Minority Business Accelerator—a national leader in accelerating the development of sizeable minority businesses and strengthening the regional minority entrepreneurial community.

Substitute Senate Bill 105 will enable greater opportunities for MBEs, VBEs, and WBEs and will have positive long-term impacts on their ability to do business and expand. The legislation stands to support the economic vitality of minority communities across Ohio. This process is tied to the broader economic vitality of our region, and the state as a whole.

Improving the business climate for MBEs, WBEs, and VBEs in our state is vitally important. Currently, minority owned businesses competing for public contracts in Ohio are often required to receive additional certifications from various local governments on top of their state certification when seeking local business opportunities. We have heard from many of our members about the administrative burdens associated with applying for and maintaining similar certifications across multiple political subdivisions. We believe Sub. SB 105 to be a remedy with fairly significant upside in a place like southwest Ohio, where Hamilton County alone has 49 separate municipalities and townships

Top-down reciprocity for state-certified MBEs, WBEs, and VBEs would simplify the experiences of minority entrepreneurs seeking local business opportunities. Ultimately, this would make doing business for these organizations more efficient and allow them to focus on running their business rather than filling out more forms or waiting for additional certifications. Through easing the administrative burdens often experienced by minority entrepreneurs who apply for and maintain multiple certifications, Sub. SB 105 cuts some of the red tape associated with accessing various business opportunities designed to increase minority participation and representation.

The Cincinnati Chamber is also supportive of any additions to Sub. SB 105 that would simplify the process by which minority business enterprises are certified, including a streamlining of the documents required for certification.

We appreciate the willingness of the bill sponsors to work collaboratively with the business community in drafting this legislation and working to alleviate some of the burdens facing minority-owned firms. We look forward to continuing the conversation on how we can best support minority-, women-, and veteran-owned businesses across Ohio.

Please reach out to me at 513-570-3120 or keagan@cincinnati-chamber.com if you have any questions. Thank you for your continued commitment to the success of our region and our state.