



Chairman Edwards, Vice-Chair Powell, Ranking Member Upchurch, and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 105.

As the front door for businesses in Ohio, my office is always working to find new ways for entrepreneurs to achieve their dream. After all, a business that succeeds is also a win for Ohio. As you may know, one way we've been working to accomplish our mission is by better connecting new businesses with resources and support they may not know is available. This can be key as a business is getting off the ground.

So much of what we do depends on listening to our constituents and finding out the challenges they're facing. As a part of this effort, I have hosted and continue to host a series of minority business roundtables across the state to better find out how Ohio can improve its collaboration with its diverse community of minority business owners. An issue that continues to come up is the unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape associated with becoming certified as a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE). The MBE program is designed to assist minority businesses in obtaining state government contracts for goods and services and can be useful in competing in the private sector as well.

Under current law, political subdivisions (i.e. counties, cities, villages) are not required to recognize MBE certificates issued by the state. This means that those who wish to do business as an MBE must become certified and pay a fee in each jurisdiction where they conduct business. This duplicative and cumbersome process is unacceptable and forces our minority business owners to continuously file paperwork and pay multiple fees just to certify over and over that they are a minority. SB 105 seeks to eliminate this needless red tape and make the MBE certification process more friendly to Ohio job creators.

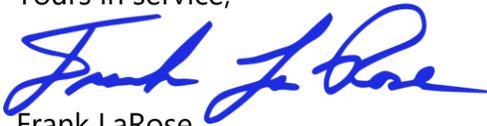
Under this bill, all jurisdictions within the state would be required to recognize the state MBE certification by the Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator, making it reciprocal in any city or county in which the business wishes to operate. Each jurisdiction may still have additional requirements, such as residency, in order to participate in local programs, but they must accept the MBE certification as proof of minority status indicated on the certificate. This bill will allow our minority business owners to focus more on growing their businesses rather than unnecessary bureaucracy.

During the committee process in the Senate, this legislation was amended to include women and veteran owned businesses, allowing even more of Ohio's entrepreneurs to

benefit from the streamlining of business certifications in this bill. That's great news for all Ohioans.

SB 105 will continue Ohio's business-friendly policies and help facilitate greater entrepreneurship and economic prosperity in the minority, women, and veteran business communities. This bill passed out of the Senate unanimously with 23 bipartisan co-sponsors. Thank you to Senator Sykes and Senator Schuring for sponsoring this important piece of legislation and thank you to the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose

Ohio Secretary of State