



Senate Bill 105: Proponent Testimony
Ohio House Economic and Workforce Development Committee
November 17th, 2021
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Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Upchurch, and members of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee, my name is Don DePerro and I'm the President and CEO of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 105 today.

As a leading voice for businesses in central Ohio, the Columbus Chamber represents over 2,100 member businesses across the 11-county Columbus Region. I would first like to thank Senator Kirk Schuring and Senator Vernon Sykes for their leadership on this important legislation. I would also like to thank Secretary Frank LaRose for being a longtime advocate for increasing the visibility, acquisition, and reciprocity of state-issued MBE certifications. We truly appreciate their collaboration on this issue and look forward to continuing our collective dialogue on how we can further support minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses in Ohio.

Ohio's MBE program was designed to help minority and other economically disadvantaged businesses compete for and acquire public contracts. Currently, MBEs competing for public contracts in Ohio are often required to receive additional MBE certifications from various local governments on top of their state certification when seeking local business procurement opportunities.

We have heard repeatedly from MBEs within our respective region about the administrative burdens associated with applying for and maintaining similar certifications across multiple political subdivisions and we believe Senate Bill 105 will help remedy this dilemma. Granting top-down reciprocity for state-certified MBEs would greatly streamline the experience of minority entrepreneurs seeking local business opportunities and make doing business for MBEs more seamless and efficient.

By easing the administrative burdens often experienced by minority entrepreneurs who apply for and maintain multiple certifications, Senate Bill 105 removes some of the red tape associated with accessing various business opportunities and will enable greater opportunities for MBEs to have positive long-term impacts on their ability to do business.

As many of our member organizations increasingly recognize the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion to the broader economic vitality of our great state, it's clear that improving the climate in which MBEs do business is critically important. The Chamber believes an MBE certification can be a significant milestone in the life of a supplier because it authenticates that the business is owned, managed, and controlled by a qualifying diverse group.

Moreover, not only does an MBE certification benefit underrepresented businesses, but it also uplifts the communities where those businesses are located through job creation, increased wages, and tax revenue. As small businesses grow, so will our nation's economy. Because most diverse businesses are small businesses, they aid in the economic recovery and sustainability of their communities. We know from multiple studies that our ability to make progress in this regard is inescapably tied to the broader economic vitality of our state which makes us view this legislation as an economic development priority.

Furthermore, Ohio's MBE certification suppliers can be a cornerstone of any organization's success, helping companies efficiently source products and services while maintaining profits, growing customers, improving the economy, and encouraging innovation. We must continue to make Ohio a welcoming state for entrepreneurs, small businesses, and the communities that support them.

We thank the legislature for their consideration and look forward to continuing the conversation on how we can best support minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses throughout Ohio.