



**BEFORE THE HEALTH COMMITTEE
THE OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT LIPPS, CHAIR**

**HOUSE BILL 248
TESTIMONY
OF
ROSS MCGREGOR
OWNER
PENTAFLEX INC.**

JUNE 22, 2021

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chairman Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the House Health Committee, my name is Ross McGregor, and I am here today in my capacity as the owner of a manufacturing company, Pentaflex, headquartered in Springfield, and on behalf of The Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) of which I am a longtime member, to testify in opposition of House Bill 248.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Ohio manufacturers led the way in workplace safety while supplying the nation with essential goods, including personal protective equipment and pharmaceuticals. As the state's largest industry sector, manufacturers continue to lead the economic recovery as we transition to a post-pandemic world.

At a company like Pentaflex, with more than 150 associates, it is critical to ensure that our team members have a safe and healthy workplace. The safety and wellbeing of my employees and their families is a primary concern for my company and for all manufacturers. Safety is not just about protecting employees from traditional workplace injuries; safety is also about making sure employees are protected as much as possible from new workplace challenges like COVID-19 or any other illness that can be easily transmitted in the workplace. If one of our employees becomes ill and transmits COVID-19 to his or her coworkers, that transmission poses a health hazard not only among our staff but to our community as well.

Restricting an employer's ability to safeguard its employees' health in the workplace not only puts its employees, their families, and communities in danger, but also impacts the manufacturing supply chain, which is already fragile due to the complex nature of our businesses.

As an example, in South Dakota, a food manufacturing facility that accounted for four to five percent of the nation's pork production had to shut down for 14 days due to a large-scale COVID-19 outbreak. It resulted in significant supply shortages throughout the country. We have seen similar outbreaks, though on a smaller scale, here in Ohio. These outbreaks have a rippling effect on the economy and are especially impactful if it is in manufacturing where many people rely on the goods produced in Ohio for everyday life.

New variant strains are creating uncertainty about the evolution of the pandemic, and Ohio continues to lag behind the rest of the nation in the percentage of vaccinated individuals. Therefore, production plants and workplaces across the state remain susceptible to outbreaks. Supply chain disruptions, rising prices for inputs and energy, and exacerbated labor shortages are already current threats. We should not continue to add to these disruptions by removing the current choices Ohio employers have at their disposal.

The proposed bill oversteps the line between public and private. This bill is the government telling me, a small business owner, what I can and cannot do inside the four walls of my factory when it comes to the safety of my employees and anyone who enters my facility. Our company is required to protect anyone who enters our facilities and we

are liable if someone is injured. Employers are in the best position to make those choices on how best to protect their companies, not the government.

Every policy decision that impacts Ohio's manufacturing competitiveness, in turn, affects our economic health and job creation. Manufacturers need policies that allow us to protect our manufacturing advantage. Throughout the pandemic, Ohio has maintained its position as a national and global manufacturing leader. Let's make sure we are not passing legislation to hinder Ohio employers' ability to do what is in their best interest and keep Ohio at the forefront of the nation's recovery.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of this committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 248, and I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.