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April 5, 2022

The Honorable Rob McColley
Chairman, Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Proponent Testimony – Substitute HB 430 (Representative Cross)

Chairman McColley, Vice Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Committee, my name is Roger Lipscomb, and as President & Executive Director for the Ohio Utilities Protection Service, d.b.a OHIO811, I am thankful for the opportunity to submit this proponent testimony regarding Substitute HB 430.

OHIO811 is a not-for-profit, member-driven organization that's been operating in Ohio for nearly 50 years. We serve Ohio as the communication link between those who have a need to excavate and those who own, operate, and maintain the essential underground utility infrastructure that we all rely on. OHIO811's mission is one of public safety, helping to protect Ohio's 11.8 million citizens, public and private property, and the environment through an efficient and effective stakeholder communication process.

Although primarily consisting of stakeholders such as utility companies, municipal and governmental entities, and utility cooperatives, our diverse membership also includes excavators, contractors, engineering and design firms, contract locating companies, and other industry trade organizations that operate on a local, state, and national level.

Through broad based public education and awareness initiatives, OHIO811 strives to facilitate understanding and foster cooperation amongst industry stakeholders. Our efforts provide all Ohioans with a safer place to live and work.

In reviewing Sub. HB 430, we believe that the additional protections it affords in preventing unwanted and illegal encroachment on to hazardous liquid and gas pipeline right of ways is a significant advancement for public safety. It will help protect Ohio's essential underground utility infrastructure and may prevent serious or even fatal incidents from occurring.

The OHIO811 mission is to serve the customers' needs by providing a quality one call process to: protect the public; protect the underground infrastructure; protect the environment. www.OHIO811.org

During our nearly 50 years of service, we have come to recognize that effective and efficient communication amongst stakeholders is at the foundation of public safety. The provisions of this bill substantially enhance communications by creating an efficient mechanism through which pipeline owners and entities planning projects in proximity to hazardous liquid and gas pipelines can communicate and exchange critically important safety information prior to any excavation activity taking place.

It is our perspective that significant efforts were taken to ensure that the provisions in Sub. HB 430 align with the existing and enforceable design process requirements codified in ORC 3781.27 and 153.64. We fully support this approach and believe that it substantially minimizes the potential for confusion or disruption amongst the thousands of stakeholders who currently utilize this process.

As an organization that represents a multi-stakeholder industry, OHIO811 has historically supported legislation that is limited in scope and does not create overreaching or unintended mandates. Based on our review, Sub. HB 430 has been narrowly crafted to not create undue burdens for any entity that does not already have that obligation under the current statute.

Today, OHIO811 stands as a proponent of Sub. HB 430. We are confident that it creates an efficient and effective mechanism through which pipeline owners and entities planning projects in proximity to hazardous liquid and gas pipelines can communicate and exchange critically important safety information prior to any excavation activity taking place.

It is our sincere belief that this legislation, as written, has the potential to prevent serious or even fatal incidents from occurring and will result in a greater level of safety for all of Ohio.

Thank you for your continued support of a safer Ohio, and please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

Respectfully Submitted,

Roger Lipscomb
President/Executive Director
OHIO811