



Proponent Testimony for Senate Bill 105
Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee
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Chairman Rulli, Vice Chair Lang, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee, thank you for the opportunity to lend our support for Senate Bill 105 which would require political subdivisions to recognize state certifications of minority business enterprises.

My name is Holly Gross, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Columbus Chamber and today, I am testifying today on behalf of the metropolitan chambers of commerce from Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown, plus the Ohio Chamber. Together, we largely make up the Ohio Metro Chamber Coalition which is comprised of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce and Ohio's eight largest metropolitan chambers of commerce whose collective membership includes more than 32,000 employers and over 3.1 million jobs across Ohio.

First, we would like to thank Senators Vernon Sykes and Kirk Schuring for their leadership on this important legislation and Secretary Frank LaRose for being a longtime advocate of increasing the visibility, use and reciprocity of state-issued MBE certifications.

As many of our chambers and respective 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 state of Ohio's MBE program was designed to assist minority and other economically disadvantaged businesses compete for and obtain 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 opportunities. We have heard time and time again from MBEs within our respective regions about the administrative burdens associated with applying for and maintaining similar certifications across multiple political subdivisions and we believe Senate Bill 105 to be a remedy.

We feel that granting top-down reciprocity for state-certified MBEs would greatly simplify the experience of minority entrepreneurs seeking local business opportunities and make doing business for MBEs more seamless and efficient. Through easing the administrative burdens often experienced by minority entrepreneurs who apply for and maintain multiple certifications, Senate Bill 105 cuts some of the red tape associated with accessing various business opportunities, benefits and/or programs designed to increase minority participation, representation and/or inclusion.

Simply put, we feel this legislation will enable greater engagement and opportunity for MBEs and have positive long-term impacts on their ability to do business. As such, it stands to support the economic vitality of minority communities and distressed populations across Ohio. 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.

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 across Ohio.