



Chairman Rulli, Vice-Chair Lang, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity 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.

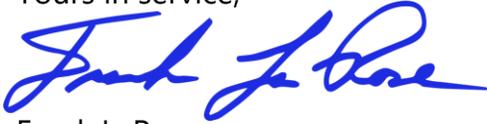
So much of what we do depends on listening to our constituents and finding out the challenges they're facing. As a part of this effort, I hosted a series of minority business roundtables to better find out how Ohio can better help our diverse community of minority business owners. An issue that kept coming up was the unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape attached to 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.

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 cumbersome process 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 cut through that red tape and make the MBE certification process as efficient as possible.

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 that 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 red tape.

SB 105 will continue Ohio's business-friendly policies and help facilitate greater entrepreneurship and economic prosperity in the minority community. 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Frank LaRose". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Frank" and last name "LaRose" clearly legible.

Frank LaRose

Ohio Secretary of State