



Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee  
Proponent Testimony on SB 105  
NAWBO Columbus  
Jeanne Gokcen, Owner, FutureCom Technologies  
March 24, 2021

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

My name is Dr. Jeanne Gokcen and I am the founder and President/CEO of FutureCom Technologies which provides telecommunications, network, and IT management services, based on Comunify<sup>®</sup>, our own speech-enabled, cloud-based unified communications platform. Our customers are mostly in Ohio, but we do have federal government contracts with multiple organizations within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)/National Weather Service. We are an approved GSA vendor and are certified as a SBA Woman-owned Small Business (WOSB). We have been awarded federal contracts for over 12 years, some of which are designated set-asides for WOSBs.

I am here to testify today on behalf of the National Association of Women Business Owners – Columbus Chapter or NAWBO in support of SB 105, sponsored by Senator Sykes and Senator Schuring, which would simplify the certification process for Minority Business Enterprises across Ohio.

We are honored that Senator Sykes has allowed us to announce that he plans to offer an amendment to SB 105 that would include the Women's Business Enterprise Certification program in the simplification process being considered in SB 105.

NAWBO Columbus is the largest chapter in the country of women-owned businesses and we advocate for changes in public policy that level the playing field for women and create a more inclusive economy. We initiated the creation of the Women's Business Enterprise Certification program in 2018 that was ultimately championed by then Senator and now Secretary of State Frank LaRose.

SB 105, as amended, would allow certification that is obtained from the state to be recognized by local governments across Ohio to eliminate or reduce the need to apply for multiple

certifications across the state that prove you are a minority business or a women-owned business.

The process for certification is burdensome and time-consuming. Although we recognize and appreciate the need to be thorough to prevent fraud within these programs, I have had to personally go through the certification process in multiple venues. Recently, I simply chose to not compete for contracts in a particular jurisdiction, because I didn't have the bandwidth to go through the entire certification process all over again. It can take months to collect all the needed documentation and check it for all the items required by a city, county, or state government, not to mention the additional fees charged by some venues.

We know that women business owners contribute greatly to the Ohio economy. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic there were more than 306,000 women-owned businesses generating approximately \$29 billion in revenue and contributing \$9.5 billion in payroll annually and 330,000 jobs in the state of Ohio. Supporting these women-owned businesses will bolster the Ohio economy as we move forward.

We appreciate Senator Sykes and Senator Schuring introducing this important legislation. It is truly a good government program that helps mostly small businesses reduce unnecessary administrative work and cost and we are excited that the committee will have a chance to include WBE's in this important bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. We urge a favorable vote on AMENDED SB 105 and I am happy to try to answer any of your questions.