**Spotter Testimony HB-113 (Regan)**

Good morning Chairman Green and members of the committee.

I serve at the Chief Investigative Reporter with News5 in Cleveland where our mission is to respond to viewers concerns, investigate on their behalf and create the opportunity for positive change that improves the lives of living in Northeast Ohio.

To that end, we responded to viewers who described to us what they felt were unfair business practices by a local towing company.

The complaints began with concerns they were not only being dramatically overcharged in violation of Ohio Revised Code.

But we found they were also specifically targeted using “hidden spotters” who watched from inside a vehicle parked nearby and then called in a tow truck within seconds of the driver exiting his or her vehicle.

So, we watched the lot in question over at least 9 days for two hours day—witnessing at least 18 vehicles being towed.

We also sought guidance from a reputable towing company operator in Cleveland who described industry concerns over what he called non-reputable companies engaged in predatory towing whose business plan revolves around grabbing a car and holding it hostage until an owner claims it.

He is also a member of the Association of Professional Towers of Ohio, the largest and most respected trade association in Ohio representing the interests of tow companies across the state.

The APTO has gone on record saying it does not support the use of spotters.

Finally, we consulted with officials in Maryland that has outlawed the practice of using “spotters”.

A spokesperson there told us that in any other context, relying on “spotters” to immediately call in a tow within seconds-- would “amount to theft” in any other context.

Ultimately, when confronted, the owner of the tow company involved admitted to us on camera that he had used spotters but insists the practice has now been discontinued.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today, and I’d be happy to answer any questions you may have.