**Sponsor Testimony - House Resolution 55 (Construction of barrier along southern U.S. border)**

Good morning Chairman Green, Vice Chairman McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee.

Many Ohioans are concerned about the devastating effect that the United States’ porous southern border has upon our local communities. Despite admirable efforts by the Ohio General Assembly to provide treatment to those addicted to opioids and education to at-risk populations, Ohio remains near the top of states affected by the opiate crisis. This chronic problem is partially due to our nation’s inability to secure our southern border, as drugs continue to flow into our country at rapid rates. Furthermore, The Columbus Dispatch reported earlier this month that the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office has released offenders who the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement requested to be held for immigration violations. Similar incidents have additionally occurred in Colorado and North Carolina. Since this past November, 29 inmates here in Franklin County alone have been released after ICE filed detainer requests. Perhaps worst of all, it is a grave tragedy that one in three women, including thousands of young girls, is sexually assaulted on their journey from their native soil to the United States.

It is critical that we preserve a path for legal immigrants to achieve the American Dream while ensuring that we close the loopholes of our border that put the hope of a better life out of reach for drug-addicted Ohioans. In President Donald Trump’s 2019 State of the Union Address, he called upon our nation’s leaders to create an immigration system that protects the lives of our citizens, including the millions of immigrants living in America who followed the rules and respected our laws. Please answer the President’s plea by supporting this resolution.

Thank you for your consideration of House Resolution 55 this morning. I look forward to answering any questions from Members of the Committee.