



ITEN INDUSTRIES

Imagineering With Plastics

**Senate Judiciary Committee
Senate Bill 308
Proponent Testimony
Wednesday, May 13, 2020**

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee My name is Pete Huggins and I am the president of ITEN Industries. ITEN is a manufacturer in thermoset and thermoplastic engineered tooling, materials, composites, fabrications, and moldings. We employ 140 men and women at our plant and offices in Ashtabula.

I am presenting testimony in support of Senate Bill 308 to provide common sense legal protections for businesses like mine that have chosen to manufacture or provide products and services in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

We are one of hundreds of manufacturers in our state that have rapidly repurposed our factories to produce needed emergency protective equipment as we all grapple with the Coronavirus.

Working together with a group of 18 other Ohio manufacturers, beginning in late March, we organized to produce and deliver one million plastic face shields for front line health care workers in just five weeks.

Normally it takes months or even years to repurpose manufacturing processes for new products, but we wanted to do our part and worked around the clock to deploy new technology, locate and order materials, retool machinery and rearrange our labor force in order to compress the timeframe to do what we could to meet the need.

Our team recognized that some machinery we had could be retrofitted to produce the clear portion of the shield. We began the final tool design based on prints and ordered the steel for the molds and by the following week, "all hands were on deck." Our team of six Journeymen working on seven machines worked through the Easter holiday weekend to have a tool ready for testing days earlier than promised.

We now have 30 of our 140 employees involved -- in part -- with the retooled processes. Now we are working to retool other processes to manufacture much-needed isolation gowns.

I can summarize by saying that despite the Coronavirus turning our lives upside down during the last 60 days, the Iten family saw an opportunity to make a difference in our communities, and our entire team rose to the challenge.

We undertook this activity because we were able to help and there was an immediate need. We did this without consideration of legal liability. However, lawsuits have been filed against manufacturers and retailers of protective equipment in other states. I'm sure I don't need to tell you how costly it can be to defend against junk lawsuit.

Manufacturers must be free to innovate and pursue market opportunities without fear of unreasonable exposure to costly lawsuits, while injured parties must have full recourse to appropriate measures of justice.

The legislation before you will protect my company from the potential of unmerited lawsuits. Hundreds of other Ohio manufacturers are in the same boat so I hope you will support the bill on our collective behalf.

I've attached a story about our face shield repurposing project that lists the other companies that collaborated on the project.

As a result of this collaboration, Ohio has gained a sustainable and local capacity to supply face shields, sanitizer, face masks and a growing number of other essential protective products that are likely to remain in short supply for months.

Thank you for your interest in my story. I hope you will support Senate Bill 308 to help Ohio's businesses as we face economic recovery, bring essential manufacturing back to Ohio, and continue to make the products that will protect our citizens.



Opinion

Editorial: Diverse Ohio firms show how to manufacture hope

Posted Apr 17, 2020 at 4:31 AM

For all the closures, layoffs and isolation that have marked the past month in our coronavirus-erupted world, it is nice to also witness examples of American innovation and patriotism stepping up to lend a hand.

Columbus can be proud of a nimble South Linden company, Plaskolite. It has responded to the pandemic by pouring most of its energy into a small segment of its business to quickly become the [supplier](#) of an estimated 80% of the plastic being used across the country to make face shields.

Plaskolite had been making plastic for the shields but suddenly saw six times the usual orders flood in from across the U.S. as well as international manufacturers, said CEO Mitch Grindley.

Honda of America Manufacturing has jumped into the plastic face shield game as well. It's not assembling automobiles these days, but it has repurposed 3D printers to help fill the need for one of the most in-demand pieces of personal protective equipment needed by front-line health care workers to protect them from contracting COVID-19.

In fact, the Ohio Manufacturers' Association said 19 Ohio companies are working to produce up to 1 million face shields, showcasing ability and agility to use what OMA President Eric Burkland called "embedded know-how" to meet extreme need in the face of a global emergency.

The roster of who is producing the shields grows even more interesting.

A California factory operated by Marysville-based Scotts Miracle-Gro

pivoted from turning out lawn spreaders to producing thousands of face shields.

In New Albany, Alene Candles switched from its namesake product to create face shields as well, saying it would donate 40,000 shields from its temporary assembly line to central Ohio first responders and medical workers and a like amount to its headquarters state, New Hampshire.

You might see fewer Little Tikes' Cozy Coupes on sidewalks this summer as the Hudson, Ohio, manufacturer is [producing](#) up to 1 million face shields.

Columbus-based Rogue Fitness is making [personal protective equipment](#) instead of exercise equipment. Canal Winchester's [Atwood Rope Manufacturing](#) is helping by producing elastic bands for face masks.

Even Aaron Westbrook, who started nonprofit [Form5 Prosthetics](#) as a New Albany high school student in 2015, has switched to 3D-printed face shields.

In an earlier patriotic pivot, distilleries across the country and in central Ohio switched their alcohol production facilities from making spirits to lifting spirits by meeting high demand for hand sanitizer.

In all, some 1,500 Ohio companies have joined the Ohio Manufacturing Alliance, an initiative Gov. Mike DeWine announced April 1 to respond to needs identified in the coronavirus fight. To make face shields, the first fruits of the alliance, meant moving from prototype to production in two weeks, the governor said.

"These are companies that normally make products ranging from toys to engine parts," DeWine said as he lauded their efforts last week.

The OMA-led alliance brings together the Ohio Manufacturing Extension Partnership, the Ohio Hospital Association, JobsOhio, the Ohio Development Services Agency and state departments of Health and Administrative Services.

If such diverse interests can come together to identify and meet the needs of the moment, how much more could such collaboration produce when we finally reach the other side of the coronavirus pandemic?

We look forward to seeing this kind of work carried forward as one of the enduring lessons of these challenging times.

