

## MEMORANDUM

To: Ohio House of Representatives - Commerce and Labor Committee

From: Brad Wendel

Date: 10/26/2021

RE: HB 235 - High Hazard Training Certification Act

Chairman Stein / Vice-Chair Johnson / Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan:

My name is Brad Wendel. I'm a plumber-pipefitter and lifelong member of Local 776 in Lima. I was elected Business Manager to represent the pipefitters who go to work every day in Lima's refinery and chemical plants. Lima tradespeople have a long history in our community. Lima remains one of Ohio's strongest industrial towns because of our local construction workforce.

Lima Building Tradespeople have built and maintained the Lima refinery since the early 1900s. Now, the new owner Cenovus is outsourcing 3,000 local, skilled construction jobs to out-of-state, unskilled labor.

When a company like Cenovus comes in and finds a cheaper construction option, they push local workers – with their exceptional safety and specialized skills training - to the side. Apprentices in the Plumber-Pipefitters joint labor-management training program do 246 hours a year in the classroom for their apprenticeship - in the field they get 2,000 hours. We provide regular training upgrades on the industrial and refining facilities where we do most of our work.

The local tradespeople we send to the Lima refinery know each unit, they know lock-out/tag-out, confined spaces. It's all dangerous stuff. If you walk into that refinery without having drilled on these protocols, it can be deadly. You can't just walk in off the street or even from an out-of-state refinery and know the place. Experience matters.

That's why there's so much concern from people in Lima about the new workers who've come into our town. Cenovus contractors are posting hiring ads all over the internet because they don't have enough construction workers to complete the turnaround. You can be working at Pizza Hut one day and go find a job as a non-union pipefitter the next day - that's the real dangerous part.

At Plumbers and Pipefitters 776, we invest about \$250,000 each year into training our Apprentices. There is no "Second Place" to a joint labor-management apprenticeship as far as high-hazard facility training and safety training goes. As far as cut-rate contractors go, they offer nothing by comparison.

The firemen and police officers and business owners and home owners and parents who send their kids to school down the street from the refinery - they are absolutely right to worry with Cenovus bringing in unskilled people to replace local Building Tradespeople on the refinery

maintenance turnaround. The work they're doing today can affect our community for years to come.

I always worry about safety. The Lima Refinery operators, the USW workers, these are people we work with day in and day out. They're like brothers and sisters to us. We want to see everyone in Lima come home from work safe.

Lima Building Tradespeople and 776 pipefitters have been maintaining that refinery since 1906. And it shows. Our guys know the Lima refinery. This is their community. They care what happens. We know that working at the Lima refinery, the wrong thing going wrong will devastate the people you care about. It could flatten Lima for miles.

An unskilled worker comes to the Lima Refinery from out of town, they're just there for a paycheck and per diem. They don't care what the area looks like when they're done.

Talk with our Lima and Shawnee Township public safety officials. They don't want to get the 911 calls after an explosion or a chemical leak at that refinery.

Local construction workers are invested in this refinery's safety and success. That's what's putting food on our tables. In the last 15 years, we've rebuilt several Lima refinery units solely with Lima Building Trades labor. Our construction quality and safety - the condition of that facility – that's a big reason why Cenovus bought the Lima Refinery from Husky in 2020.

I'm not a pro-regulations kind of guy. Lima Tradespeople are partners to our end-clients and contractors. We want them to stay in business and to earn the revenue they need - we help them with that. But we must require adequate safety. We won't put Lima lives on the line because some Canadian executives want to save a quick buck on safety and skilled labor.

Just read a few of the refinery accident reports from Texas. House Bill 235 can literally save Ohio lives. Safety should be our biggest priority in high-hazard facilities. Lima Building Tradespeople don't cut corners on safety or skills training in any instance - especially in an oil refinery in our backyard.

Thank you for considering this urgent safety legislation.

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