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Proponent Testimony for Sub. Senate Bill 105
House Economic and Workforce Development Committee
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Chair Edwards, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Upchurch, and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to lend my support to Senate Bill 105, which would require political subdivisions to recognize state certifications of MBEs, WBEs, and VBEs.

I would like to thank Senators Vernon Sykes and Kirk Schuring for their leadership on this important legislation and Secretary of State Frank LaRose for being a longtime advocate of increasing the visibility, utilization, and reciprocity of state-issued MBE certifications. We have genuinely appreciated their collaboration on this issue and look forward to continuing our collective dialogue on how we can further support minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses.

The Ohio Department of Development states there are 1,145 certified MBEs in Ohio. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, there are 122,602 MBEs in Ohio. This means less than one percent (1%) of Ohio MBEs are registered. We view the MBE certification as a prime opportunity to encourage and promote increased business opportunities for minority entrepreneurs. If we can improve the application process and get more MBEs certified, we can broaden the ability of MBEs to seek out business opportunities and realize the benefits of being certified. Across Ohio, some examples of these benefits include private sector procurement, public *and* private access to capital programs, exclusive consulting, and coaching opportunities, and – we cannot forget – set aside contracts.

We appreciate your consideration of this important legislation and urge you to support Senate Bill 105. Furthermore, we encourage you to continue working with key stakeholders on additional ways we can improve the State of Ohio's certification programs in ways that stand to increase business opportunities for MBEs, WBEs and VBEs. We look forward to helping continue dialogs about accelerating the growth and success of Ohio's small businesses and supporting the ability of these firms to increase their growth, investment, and employment in Ohio.

Thank you and I am available to answer any questions.