



OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

State Representative Thomas Hall

HB 225 Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair John, Ranking member Sobecki, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for allowing my joint sponsor and I to provide testimony on HB 225 today. This piece of legislation is a small token of appreciation to the men and women who risk their lives to keep us safe on a daily basis.

Growing up, I did not have your traditional childhood. If I wasn't at school, I was at our local firehouse with my dad. My hometown of Madison Township has a volunteer fire department. Of the 14 public service departments in my district, 10 still have volunteers that respond when needed to help their local community. These are the men and women who are our neighbors, our friends, our local heroes.

According to the FEMA's National Fire Registry, 60.7% of Ohio's fire departments operate completely with volunteers, while 12.6% are manned fully with career firefighters. Currently there are 1,133 registered fire departments total in our state. But an alarming statistic that has many wondering what's next is the decrease in volunteerism not only in our state but across the country. According to April 2019 numbers from the Ohio Department of Public Safety, there has been a decrease of over 1,700 volunteers since 2013. That rate, is getting worse. With recent conversations with the State Fire Marshall, myself and colleagues are looking at creating a volunteer fire task force to attempt to slow this problem down.

That issue and many more are why I am here today to testify on this important legislation. If we do nothing, volunteerism will only be a thing of the past. We must act to help out the ones who are there for us in a moment's notice. I am not here to say this tax credit will prevent all volunteers from leaving, but this will be a great start in the right direction for departments in my district and all across this great state.

I am very passionate about this issue. This tax credit will mean so much to those very people who risk their own personal lives for our safety each and every day. I can assure you they don't do it for the money, they do it because they care. It is time for the State of Ohio to show appreciation to the many great volunteer first responders in this state. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony today and we would be happy to take any questions at this time.