



**Representative Lauren McNally**  
**59<sup>th</sup> House District**

**Representative Elgin Rogers**  
**44<sup>th</sup> House District**

Good afternoon, Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch and members of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee. We are grateful for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony in support of House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 10.

HCR 10 is intended to recognize the impact of the lifeguard shortage in Ohio and encourage individuals to consider a career in lifeguarding. A lifeguard career path can extend further into public service including becoming a park ranger, firefighter, and so much more. These professions are also struggling with shortages, but we won't be able to recruit the numbers we need to fill these jobs without first shining the light on lifeguarding which can be more accessible for young adults and professionals.

Like many job fields, the lifeguard shortage is well documented. Across the country, states and municipalities have been facing their worst shortages on record over the past year. We have over 309,000 public pools in the U.S., and we're looking at over 50% of them being closed or having a reduction in hours.<sup>1</sup> In Ohio over the last year, cities like Miamisburg<sup>2</sup>, Dayton<sup>3</sup>, Youngstown, Mentor<sup>4</sup>, Montgomery<sup>5</sup>, Brooklyn<sup>6</sup>, Willoughby, Euclid, Chardon, Perry Township, Lake County Metroparks, Headlands Beach State Park<sup>7</sup> and the list goes on have all reported shortages in lifeguards, forcing them to close or adjust the times of their aquatic recreation. This can present serious safety concerns with increased risk of accidental drowning as well as broader public health concerns as fewer Ohioans get outdoors and partake in an activity known for broader mental and physical benefits.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/lifeguard-shortage-half-of-public-pools-in-us-may-close-or-limit-hours-this-summer/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wdtn.com/news/local-news/lifeguard-shortage-still-hurting-miami-valley-pools/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.whio.com/news/lifeguard-shortage-impacting-pool-operations-dayton/cab2e5bb-6d0b-406d-bed1-60f3616817b7/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://fox8.com/news/mentor-keeping-majority-of-outdoor-pools-closed-due-to-lifeguard-shortage/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://nypost.com/2023/06/28/ohio-grandma-gail-rodgers-becomes-lifeguard-to-keep-community-pool-open-amid-staffing-shortage/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/pool-of-eligible-lifeguard-candidates-is-shallow-cities-with-lifeguards-struggle-with-staffing>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.news-herald.com/2023/06/01/northeast-ohio-pools-beach-grapple-with-lifeguard-shortage/>

These shortages are due to many contributing factors and were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic that prevented many from receiving the hands-on training required for certification. However, the trend of lifeguard shortages precedes the pandemic and the limited access to safe water recreation creates life threatening concerns and impacts the public health and wellbeing of people in our communities.

But what's most sad about this trend is that the reputation around lifeguarding is cited as one of the main reasons people just aren't applying for this type of career. The American Lifeguard Association has been quoted as saying "We need to have communities take lifeguarding seriously and say, listen, this is a professional organization. It's not just a summertime job for college and high school. It could be a career".<sup>8</sup>

Municipalities are stepping up to better incentivize the attractiveness of these positions by providing wage increases, paid training, retention bonuses, and flexible scheduling. With an Ohio lifeguard earning an average wage of \$17 per hour, and a projected increase of 12% over the next five years, lifeguarding can be a path to the middle class and a valuable career, including a possible government pension.<sup>9</sup> HCR 10 recognizes this and demonstrates our support for that endeavor.

I want to tell you about the Lifeguard Academy of Youngstown. Founded just a few short years ago, the Lifeguard Academy of Youngstown aims to provide the youth of my city a pathway to careers in firefighting, park rangers, teaching, nursing, and much more. Careers with purpose, good pay and useful skills training that our communities are in need of.

The Academy was born out of an idea from individuals working within Youngstown's Parks Department and our Youngstown Fire Chief, who, coincidentally, started out as a lifeguard himself. This group of individuals hasn't just been talking the talk over the last handful of years. They've successfully recruited kids post-high school into their program, trained them and found them employment with state parks and local municipalities. Excitingly, even one has gone on to the firefighter academy.

I want you to think about the impact of that talent pipeline for a moment. This Academy is solving a problem here and now while providing another potential solution to a problem in the years to come. This initiative is giving hope and possibilities to young people while making our public bodies of water safer. In turn, this makes our communities safer and more prosperous.

Public safety should always be a government priority. Additionally, we are always talking about two things in the economic development and workforce space; workforce shortage and alternative career paths for our youth. HCR 10 is another tool in the toolbox for our state in addressing both concerns, helping to promote a long-term solution to several public safety and economic needs.

Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch and members of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/07/1180840844/heres-whats-driving-the-lifeguard-shortage>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes339092.htm>

support of HCR 10. I will now turn it over to my Joint Sponsor, State Representative Elgin Rogers.