



BEFORE THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE
REPRESENTATIVE JAY EDWARDS, CHAIRMAN

TESTIMONY OF
DALE FOERSTER, STARR MANUFACTURING, INC.
OMA MEMBER

June 18, 2024

HB 435 -Proponent Testimony

Chairman Edwards, Ranking Minority Member Bride-Sweeney and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 435, sponsored by Representatives Santucci and Demetriou, which would create the Manufacturing Technology Assistance Grant Program (MTAP).

My name is Dale Foerster and I represent Starr Manufacturing, Inc. as a member of the Ohio Manufacturers Association.

Starr Manufacturing, located in Vienna, Ohio (15 minutes north of Youngstown and 10 miles east of Pennsylvania), is a family-owned company founded in 1965, currently employing 50 highly skilled employees. We produce custom industrial equipment and machinery for diverse industries, with core competence in oil and gas (mainly as OEM), energy, material handling, waste management including environmental waste management.

House Bill 435 creates the **Manufacturing Technology Assistance Grant Program (MTAP)** that will provide an opportunity for manufacturers with under 500 employees to apply for \$150,000 in grant funding for equipment upgrades and smart technology integration.

MTAP represents a crucial opportunity to empower Ohio's small to mid-size manufacturers to thrive in an increasingly competitive global market. By providing grants for the adoption and integration of smart technologies, this program will not only drive operational improvements but also ensure the long-term sustainability of our manufacturing sector.

For our company, MTAP would help us realize operational efficiencies by allowing the state to partner with us on technological improvements. As our highly skilled team members retire, we're faced with a huge gap in knowledge which we can only overcome by a shift towards new technology and automation to bridge gaps between those retiring employees and emerging employees who will utilize automation to perform some of those dying hands-on skills. It's imperative that we adapt and tap into that new kind of skill and seemingly inborn ability in order to enable us and our emerging employees to thrive in the reality of the modern world. Embracing, teaching and implementing modern manufacturing technologies and at the same time teaching proven "old" process knowledge using the area technical education centers is vital to our long-term success and ever-tightening and more difficult competition. For small companies like ours, a boost made possible through this proposed grant would be of immeasurable value across the board!

With an initial funding allocation of \$12,000,000, this program will not only enable manufacturers to thrive in today's dynamic business environment but also maintain Ohio's position as a frontrunner in manufacturing technologies.

We urge your support for this proposal, recognizing its significance in driving economic competitiveness, fostering innovation, and ensuring the continued success of Ohio's largest industry - manufacturing.

Thank you for your consideration of this program. I am happy to answer any questions you may have about this proposal or our company.