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## **SB 195 – Ohio Ireland Trade Commission Proponent Testimony**

***Nikki Cooper***

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Chair Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Senate General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 195, which would establish the Ohio Ireland Trade Commission. My name is Nikki Cooper and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Ohio Business Roundtable, a statewide business association comprised of CEOs and Presidents of the top companies in the state. We currently have over 115 members, collectively employing over 600,000 Ohioans and generating a revenue of more than \$2.5 trillion, which contributes significantly to Ohio's economy.

Our membership includes industry leading companies representing over 20 Ohio industries, including—but not limited to—companies such as KeyBank and Huntington in the banking sector; American Financial and Nationwide in the insurance sector; Kokosing in construction; CareSource, Cleveland Clinic, and many of Ohio's children's hospitals in healthcare; The Ohio State University and Miami University in higher education; Owens Corning, RPM International, Inc., and Procter & Gamble in manufacturing; AEP and Marathon in energy and utilities, among others.

The Ohio Business Roundtable supports policies that will strengthen our state's economic and workforce development, reduce onerous barriers for businesses, and foster an environment for businesses to invest and grow in Ohio while competing in the global economy. An important piece of this is facilitating positive relationships with other countries to better support bilateral trade, as well as opportunities for further economic investment and partnership.

The Ohio-Ireland relationship has continued to gain momentum over the past year, especially with the establishment of the first Irish Consulate office in Ohio. Additionally, in May 2023, Aer Lingus established nonstop service from Cleveland to Dublin, supported by JobsOhio's Air Service Restoration program. The flight has

already enjoyed significant interest from both business and personal travelers, with a strong performance compared to other Aer Lingus routes.

OBRT is supportive of Senate Bill 195 because it will build upon these great strides. At least a third of OBRT members either have a European headquarters in Ireland or participate in the Irish economy, which includes academic and exchange programs. A better trade and business relationship encourages continued economic investment in our state, as well as innovation and idea sharing across industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, and technology.

Trade between Ohio and Ireland has already seen great progress in recent years—according to the Embassy of Ireland, from 2016-2020, Ohio exported \$539M worth of goods and \$5.8B in services to Ireland. Comparatively, in 2022 alone, Ohio exported \$185.35M in goods to Ireland, which was a 65.8% increase from 2021 per the Ohio Department of Development. The Ohio Ireland Trade Commission will further promote Ohio's exports to and imports from Ireland, helping companies expand and enter international markets.

The Ohio Business Roundtable supports Senate Bill 195, as it will only continue to further economic investment and growth in Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions.