

# **SB 162 – Emergency Responders**

## **Opposing Testimony**

Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am here today in opposition to SB 162.

Mr./Madam Chair, I recognize that emergency first responders do so much for this state. But it is not just emergency first responders that are experiencing shortages. For several years now Michigan employers, particularly for small businesses, have been struggling to meet staffing needs. While emergency first responders are critical of our immediate health concerns, having a strong workforce is necessary for the economic wellbeing of our state. Both are essential for our citizens to thrive, and we cannot cut short the needs of one for the sake of the other.

Mr./Madam Chair, consider if you were a small business owner. You run a machine shop and only have a few technicians who have been around long enough to know how the system operates. Now, consider what happens when that technician, without warning, does not show up for his or her shift. Orders will be backlogged, there's potential for late orders and lost clients, and in the end an inability for you as a small business owner to deliver goods and services. This could eventually cause you to close if situations like this continue to arise. This would not only affect you, but it would severely impact the rest of your small workforce who would either be stretched thin because of their missing coworker or must find a new job if things get especially bad.

Now, our small business owners are resilient and adaptive, and I have full confidence that if they have the capacity to work with an emergency first responder that they will. It is not the place of the state to enforce that restriction on them if it is not practical. Regardless of the reason for the person's absence, the missed work is missed work. It should be a valid consideration for an employer to evaluate if they can risk having an employee who may be unreliable even if it is for a justifiable reason.

I would also like this committee to consider the impacts on the emergency responders themselves. The emphasis of this bill is to incentivize people working part time as an emergency responder and have an additional job. This is a highly taxing combination, and the weight of each job will feed into the other driving more burnout. I dare not say that those who work part time as emergency responders cannot handle two jobs. It takes a very strong person to be able to work two jobs, especially when one of them is so physically and emotionally taxing. Our solution to this shouldn't be to create more part-time positions for emergency first responders. Instead, our efforts should be put into getting emergency services more full-time employees rather than making both emergency services and small businesses operate on a level that is not sustainable.

Mr./Madam Chair, I am so thankful for our first responders, and they should get all the help we can provide them. This bill is not the method to do that. Let us look for a long-term solution to our staffing shortages rather than applying a band aid that might work a little in the short run but will ultimately leave us wanting. It is for these reasons that I strongly encourage this body to vote no on SB 162. Thank you, and I will gladly take any questions at this time.

### **Article**

Cassandra Lybrink, et al. (June 19, 2022). The Holland Sentinel, *Michigan employers warn of dire consequences, should labor shortages continue*. Retrieved from <https://uwhuskieswire.usatoday.com/story/business/employment/2022/06/19/staffing-shortages-leave-michigan-employers-feeling-helpless/7542728001/>