

Testimony of

**Ruby Concrete Company**

submitted to the

**U.S. House of Representatives**

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade**

for its hearing on

“HR 985, Concrete Masonry Products Research, Education and Promotion Act of 2015”

held on

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**Kent Waide**

President

On behalf of:

Ruby Concrete Company

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Good morning, it is a privilege to testify in front of this Subcommittee today on behalf of my company and others like mine. My name is Kent Waide and I represent Ruby Concrete Company of Madisonville, Kentucky. I believe our company is like many others within the concrete masonry industry. It began in 1869 and has been family operated for 146 years. We currently have three generations from our family working at Ruby Concrete Company, and our business is recognized as one of the oldest in Kentucky.

I am proud of the role our company has played in our region's history. We supplied the masonry products used to build our local schools, fire stations, home centers, grocery stores and other facilities that are used in our communities every day. We have also supplied public works projects including roads, bridges, courthouses and judicial centers. In addition, our products were used to build barracks for the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division to house our troops at Fort Campbell.

We employ 16 people directly and create jobs both upstream from our vendors, and downstream to our customers. Our business is small, innovative, resourceful, and aggressive. During the construction recession, we reinvested our capital to create one of the most modern concrete products plants in the U.S.

The construction materials industry is changing, however. Companies like mine struggle to compete with other building materials that have different demographics. We welcome competition; but we seek a mechanism to level the playing field for our commodity industry.

If we manage our resources wisely, Ruby Concrete can invest in modern equipment and support our employees. But a company of my size simply does not have the resources to educate, research, and promote our commodity products throughout a broad-based market. We belong to associations that perform good work on our behalf. But I believe a commodity check-off program is necessary if we are to collectively invest more fairly and support growth that will benefit all of us in the industry.

Many of you know our product as a gray 'cinder block', but it is actually a very versatile design tool. Producers like me use a wide range of natural, manufactured, and recycled aggregates that are readily found throughout the country.

Concrete blocks are strong enough to support tall buildings and protect families from flying debris in hurricanes and tornados. They are non-combustible and prevent the spread of fires in buildings. They also survive forest fires.

Reinforced concrete masonry protects people and assets in earthquakes and wind events. It also shields against explosions and bullets, which is why our military uses concrete masonry to build mock cities in order to train soldiers in urban assault and terrorism defense.

Concrete masonry does not rot or mold, and is not subject to termites. It has terrific thermal mass properties that reduce the amount of insulation needed to meet energy codes. It

can be made in a rainbow of colors to allow creative designs that integrate texture, and imagination. Our company was commissioned by a university to produce a purple concrete block that was used to build a signature wall on their campus using their school colors.

These properties, design qualities, and uses resulted through many years of work, and testing. We have learned from each other and built on shared knowledge. But the old system of learning and communicating is ineffective in today's world. Technology, speed, and resources are necessary for our industry to advance, and we currently cannot keep up. We are losing ground, losing producers, and losing local jobs.

I have spoken with many concrete block producers across the country and we agree that our industry needs a new approach to support education, research that fosters new technologies, and broad-based promotion. Our industry will leverage the outcomes of these investments to support the construction of higher performance, more sustainable and cost effective building solutions. That is why we urge the Committee to pass the Concrete Masonry Research, Education, and Promotion Act, HR 985.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to addressing your questions.