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Mr. Chairman and
INTRODUCTION (GREETING) TO (COMMITTEE MEMBERS)

Thank you for the opportunity to present to you our concerns regarding well intended child labor laws, and the adverse impact some of these laws are now having in our Amish community, to our way of life.

As I'm sure you are aware, children in our community finish classroom school in eighth grade, learning the essentials of reading, writing and arithmetic. While this learning is an important part of shaping their lives, preparing them for adulthood, their success with our way of life requires other skills as well. Many of our adult occupations have been learned by doing. Despite living in a technological world, we have limited our selves, by choice, to occupations that leave time for our faith in God, and for our families. Farming, carpentry, wood and metal shops, saw mills, harness making and furniture making are some of the ways I'm sure you recognize we earn our living.

They are occupations that reinforce self reliance within our group or community as well as the work ethic. While many of your own children might have a computer at an early age to begin to acquire the skills they will need to thrive in a modern, fast paced world, our society requires faith and tradition to keep itself together to continue to thrive in a modern world. Again, this tradition is one of our faith in God, a belief in the importance of our families, of self reliance within our group and hard work. These beliefs and lessons we share with our children, even at a very young age. They learn by our example and by doing. We recognize that child labor laws were made and needed to correct abuses in the past. These laws still help insure that children are not forced into unsafe, exploitive labors. We hope you recognize that we pursue the same goal as you regarding the safety of our children.

In 1971, the Supreme Court, by its decision in *Yoder vs* (Board of Education) recognized the intent and purpose for us to educate our children in our own schools. Graduates from our Amish schools are most often eager to prove themselves as hard workers. They turn to farm, shop, or mill owners like myself, to earn an income to get started on a farm or other business on their own. This is a cycle that has repeated itself successfully throughout the history of our community in the United States.

Despite rising land costs, property taxes, income taxes, school taxes, start up costs for business, buildings, equipment and machinery, our young people overcome many obstacles to start off on their own in our community. Besides a commitment to hard work to achieve their goals, they also must rely on their families and business owners like myself to help them get started.

Sincerely,

William Burkholder

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