

**Rep. Thomas P. Murt**  
**Labor Relations Committee Testimony - HB 2515**  
**September 23, 2010**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for allowing me to testify today. I am Representative Thomas Murt of the 152<sup>nd</sup> Legislative District. My district includes portions of both Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties.

Mr. Chairman, Pennsylvania has become home to a growing number of television and film productions. As more productions come to our Commonwealth, we have a responsibility to discern our laws to ensure they are sufficient to enable these productions to occur safely and that the interests of all involved are protected.

According to the Internet Movie Database, which aggregates data on feature films, television episodes, made-for-TV movies, TV series, direct-to-video movies, and live action video games, 922 productions took place all or in part in Pennsylvania during the period between 2002 and 2008. In 2002, 31 films were released which took place in Pennsylvania. By 2008, that number increased to 175. That represents an average annual growth rate of 33 percent over that period.

As we are all aware, a great deal of attention has been paid to one particular production here in Pennsylvania -- a production that features several children. While my bill would impact that production, I want to make it clear to the committee that my legislation was not designed with one particular production, television network, or group of people in mind. Rather, my legislation is aimed at correcting the deficiencies in Pennsylvania's child labor law as it pertains to the entertainment industry.

A few months ago, the Republican Policy Committee held a hearing on this issue in my district. At that hearing, we heard testimony from officials at the Department of Labor and Industry as well as from a number of experts and individuals who have been involved in television productions.

Among them was Paul Petersen, who is here with us today. As you know, Paul was a very well-known child actor himself, having starred on the Donna Reed Show, and he also was an original Disney Mouseketeer. He knows first-hand, the pitfalls of involving a child in this kind of work without adequate protection for the child.

Based on testimony from that hearing and in consultation with a number of experts on this issue, I have developed House Bill 2515. This bill is aimed at addressing several holes in the current law. Specifically, my legislation would:

- Require all minors involved in television or film productions to have a work permit issued by the state Department of Labor and Industry, to ensure all adequate provisions have been made for the minor's educational instruction, supervision, health and welfare.
- Second, it would restrict minors involved in television or film productions to work between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. and set guidelines for amount of hours for work, recreation, school work, and activities per work day.
- Third, it requires the presence of a "set teacher" on the set of any production. This person will serve as an advocate for the minor to ensure the minor's health, education, and moral safety on the set. In addition, this person will monitor the working conditions, the minor's mental health, and the demands placed on the minor to ensure they are appropriate to the minor's age, strength, and stamina.

- Finally, my bill will require that 15 percent of a minor's gross earnings from work in television or film productions be set aside by the employer in a trust for the minor.

At least one parent or legal guardian shall be trustee of these funds, unless otherwise determined by a court.

Mr. Chairman, I am certainly willing to work with the committee and other stakeholders to ensure the interests of Pennsylvania's children are protected. As a matter of fact, I have already met with some concerned parties to discuss their specific areas of interest and also to identify common ground. Since drafting my legislation, I have heard from a number of people with an interest in this issue.

After consulting with them, I am already in the process of drafting an amendment that:

- Addresses the hours during which children under the age of 7 may work in movie and television productions,
- Clarifies the trust fund provisions to ensure that the money is the property of the child, and
- Adjusts the description of the set teacher to allow a certified teacher from another state already working with a production company, to continue in that role here in Pennsylvania.

Mr. Chairman, Pennsylvania's law must evolve to address current conditions of the industry. As the number of films and television shows produced in Pennsylvania continues to increase, it is only sensible that we amend our laws to ensure that they address the particular issues associated with this industry. Nowhere, is that more important than on issues which have an impact on our children. We must ensure our child labor laws provide appropriate protections for the children involved. My legislation will do that. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you once again for allowing me to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions.