



**State Representative Thomas West
State Representative Bill Seitz**

Sponsor Testimony – House Bill 259

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Rezabek, Ranking Member Celebrezze, and members of the Criminal Justice Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony this afternoon on House Bill 259, legislation that will provide small business owners with the tools necessary to protect their livelihoods and communities.

This legislation will establish Violence in Liquor Establishments database. Under this bill, if an individual is convicted of an offense of violence for an incident that took place within a facility with a Class D, A-1-A, or A-1c liquor permit, that individual will be added to a non-public database of those who have made the same mistake. Access to this database will be given exclusively to these facilities, and its information is not to be shared with anyone else. These liquor permits cover bars, nightclubs, breweries, etc.

However, this database is not a lifetime sentence. Any Ohioan in the database will be removed after three years. This bill does not create any new crimes or sentences, and this bill does not create a new public registry. It simply acts as a means to communicate existing convictions to the specific institutions that would be directly negatively impacted by a repeat offense. By giving local business owners the information about prior crimes in similar settings, we are allowing entrepreneurs to defend their businesses.

There are locally owned bars and clubs in our communities that can be and have been essentially destroyed by the harm done to their reputation following an act of violence on or around their premises. When community members hear about a fight or a stabbing at a bar, they understandably feel cautious about going there in the future – and too many of these crimes are being committed by those who have a pattern of drunk debauchery. But the owners and employees of these businesses had no way of knowing that, and they should not be punished for wanting to serve a patron. This bill will give these small businesses the tools they need to combat this problem.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to your questions.