



Chairman Smith, Ranking member Cera, members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on House bill 49. My name is Joe Rosato and I am the Director of Government Affairs for the Ohio Restaurant Association.

The Ohio Restaurant Association was founded in 1920 and is the leading trade association for the food service industry in Ohio. The association works to represent, educate and promote the rapidly growing food service industry in Ohio.

The purpose of my testimony is in opposition to HB 49. More specifically, the proposed tax increase on beer and wine. We have heard in earlier testimony that MillerCoors Trenton brewery would be forced to pay on additional \$8.1 million in additional taxes per year. Production facilities would be forced to pass these costs on down the line to restaurants who will undoubtedly be forced to pass this cost onto the customer.

Restaurants operate on very small margins and many members are struggling to keep prices competitive. The last thing we need is a 70% increase in alcohol taxes. Just remember, eating out is not a necessity, and often times when household budgets are tight it's the first thing to go.

Our industry is a driving force in Ohio's economy. We provide jobs and build careers for thousands of people, and play a vital role in local communities throughout the state. Restaurant and foodservice industry jobs are 10% of the workforce and are the third largest employer in the state of Ohio.

In closing, ORA member faces a wide variety of economic uncertainties ranging from higher energy prices, increase in food prices, rise in health care costs, an uncertain labor market just to name a few. Now is simply not the time to raise an additional tax on Ohio businesses and consumers. I strongly urge the Committee to factor these items into consideration.