



Tom Brinkman Jr.
State Representative, 27th District

John Becker
State Representative, 65th District

Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 761

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 761, which requires financial transparency from Convention and Visitors' Bureaus (CVBs) when members on their boards also serve as public officials.

CVBs receive over 95% of their funding with public monies. County Commissioners designate the CVB in their county to receive those funds and also typically appoint the majority of the CVB Board.

Between 2017 and 2018, Attorney General Mike DeWine issued five opinions disallowing service of public officials on CVB Boards. The cited reasons include improper interest in a contract and conflicting fiduciary responsibility.

In June, the General Assembly passed Amended House Bill 18, which in part sought to grant statutory permission for public officials to sit on CVB Boards. Transparency with respect to public funds is important. HB 18 failed to address many of the points of concern raised by the Attorney General's office.

This CVB transparency legislation is designed to address the issue created by HB 18. If public officials serve a dual role as CVB board members, the CVB's board must (1) promptly prepare and file the minutes of each meeting of the board and open the minutes to inspection by the public and (2) prepare and open for inspection all financial information and vendor payments records.

If local officials do not serve on their CVB Board, nothing changes for the CVB and there are no requirements. However, if they do, the public will have ready access to their CVB's decision-making process.

This bill is tactical and seeks to close a significant transparency issue created by HB 18. In the future, we encourage bipartisan consideration of more comprehensive legislation addressing publicly funded non-profits.

For now, this bill aims to close a clear and significant transparency gap created by HB 18 and against the advice of five opinions from Attorney General Mike DeWine.

Once again, we would like to thank the committee for your consideration and would be happy to answer any questions.