

Provided by Robert S. "Chip" Hart III

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To: Representative Louis W. Blessing, Chairman, Governmental Accountability and Oversight Committee and Committee Members

Honorable Members of the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee,

I have previously provided testimony (written and/or oral) before the Senate Ways and Means Committee and the State and Local Government Committees regarding as well as providing documents. The documents and testimony are part of previous records and address the subject of responsibility, transparency, and accountability by the previous leadership of the Gr. Cincinnati Convention & Visitors Bureau (GCCVB). The GCCVB is now under the new leadership of Julie Harrison Calvert as CEO. I have met with Ms. Harrison and she stated she is addressing the systemic problems for which the previous leadership created and are previously outlined by my testimonies. I believe her efforts have great potential but the process will be long and exhausting. I also believe the City of Cincinnati has participated to address problems also and has put forth an effort also.

Having stated this, I also firmly believe that H.B. 761 is a positive step toward correcting and averting potential future issues and conflicts that can arise when elected officials take board positions on convention & visitors bureaus. As quasi government agencies, some with paid memberships and others without, they are funded by public funds (the lodging tax) up to 100% of their annual budget, there has to be accountability and accountability with how those tax dollars are spent to benefit the county in which they are charged with their mission. Although H. B. 761 does not go far enough, it is a great start to insure some independence or some transparency of tax dollars expenditures. Furthermore, a city and/or county *does have the ability to direct* how those tax receipts are spent such as on a stadium, convention center or other tourism generating attraction. Or, in a city or county budgetary crisis, the lodging tax may be allotted back to the general fund as I had previously understood the original design of the lodging tax. That is a natural conflict of interest that further calls for transparency when government takes positions on CVB Boards.

Thank you for this opportunity and hope every member of the committee will support this common sense piece of legislation.

Respectfully Submitted: Chip Hart

