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Chair Anielski, Ranking Member Holmes, and members of the House State and Local Government committee; thank you for allowing us to present House Bill 530 before you today. House Bill 530 authorizes local elected officers who have levied a hotel lodging excise tax, or a designee of such officers to simultaneously hold the position of officer or member of the board of trustees of a convention and visitors' bureau without constituting incompatible offices. Our legislation is the companion to Senator Peterson's Senate Bill 252.

As former County Commissioners, Representative Arndt and myself are aware that it has been frequent practice for a County Commissioner to serve on the local Convention and Visitor's Bureau's board, along with a variety of other boards in their capacity as a County Commissioner. These opportunities provide Commissioners not only with a better understanding of the challenges facing the CVB board, but it also provides the opportunity to better coordinate efforts in achieving the mission of these publicly funding organizations. In short, service on these boards allows the county to encourage collaboration within the county, while also helping to maximize the economic development opportunities in the most fiscally responsible way.

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As Representative Hambley mentioned in consultation with Senator Peterson and the CCAO, it was brought to our attention that the Ohio Revised Code does not expressly allow this dual service. Our bill clarifies this discrepancy by specifically allowing local elected officials or their designee to sit on the board of their local Convention and Visitor's Bureau. This is common practice in communities across this state and in fact a position that I served in during my previous tenure as Ottawa County Commissioner. This practice continued until just recently when it became apparent the O.R.C. does not expressly permit this even though there is no additional compensation. In a district such as mine where this industry is such a large economic driver it is imperative that the Ohio Revised Code grants this permissive authority. Not only does this allow for better coordination of services and economic development strategies, but in many more rural parts of our state, it provides much needed flexibility in areas where there may not be as many qualified and willing individuals with the ability to serve.



REPRESENTATIVES STEVE HAMBLEY AND STEVE ARNDT

Our legislation is narrow in scope to fix this single issue. Further, it offers protections for municipal corporations and chartered counties who may want to adopt more restrictive policies regarding the simultaneous holding of these positions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We are available for any questions.