



**Testimony of Andrew W. Herf, Executive Director
Proponent of HB 571
House Ways & Means Committee
June 19, 2018**

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Rogers and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity today to testify in support of House Bill 571.

My name is Andy Herf and I am the executive director of the Ohio Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (OACVB). A convention and visitors bureau is a local agency whose sole purpose is to promote the region, including a broad array of attractions, such as sporting events, museums, festivals, and of course hotel stays. The OACVB has members representing cities and counties across the state.

When a hotel room is booked through the hotel website, there is a local hotel lodging tax associated with the cost of the room to the end consumer. A portion of that money then goes back to the convention and visitors bureau, which in turn uses that funding to continue to advertise regionally, leading to increased local business and more hotel stays.

For example, the Fairfield County Visitors and Conventions Bureau promotes the Route 33 Brew Trail, which just launched in May, as well as the Decorative Art Center of Ohio, the Ohio Glass Museum, the Historical Aircraft Squadron Museum, the Sherman House Museum and the Lancaster Festival, which is a 10-day music and arts festival from July 19-28 this year. The Pickaway County Visitor's Bureau promotes the Circleville Pumpkin Show. The Lake County Visitors Bureau promotes over a dozen wineries in Lake County and nearly as many fishing charters.

In other words, the money raised by hotel stays booked through local hotels is used to continue to promote that region to more outsiders to attract more people to stay in more hotel rooms. However, when hotel intermediaries are used to book the rooms, they do not advertise local attractions. Like many others in this room, I receive promotional emails from different hotel intermediaries. In each case, they advertise rooms in locales that they are looking to sell. One e-mail I received promoted Las Vegas, Mexico, Iceland, Greece and Turkey, Bali, Singapore, Myrtle Beach, Orlando, New York City, Disney Cruise Lines, a Mediterranean Cruise, a Caribbean Cruise, a Rhine Cruise and several flight deals.

The money being used to convince me to travel the world could have been spent by local CVBs, convincing people to come to Ohio. The reality is that Ohio competes for tourism spending with places like New York, Las Vegas and Myrtle Beach. We have a chance in this state to capture the money that is already being collected. In fact, the consumer sees no difference in price, leading them to believe they are already paying the full tax. If the hotel intermediaries were required to remit the tax to the local communities, we would see greater advertising on Ohio attractions and hotel stays.

Therefore, I urge your support for HB 571. We need to keep our money in Ohio promoting our local communities. I am happy to answer questions.