

Chairman Koehler, Vice-Chair Smith, Ranking Member Brent and members of the House Agriculture Committee. My name is Matt Old and I currently serve as Vice-President of the Erie County Board of Commissioners. I am here today in support of 665. This bill aims to open amusement parks and indoor waterparks. Erie and Ottawa Counties rely heavily on tourism as an economic engine. Cedar Point, Kalahari, Castaway Bay, Great Wolf Lodge and our other hotels are an extremely important component of our local economy. Tourism brings over 11 million visitors to our region each year. It accounts for almost 14,000 jobs with over \$350 million in wages. Taxes to support our local services and infrastructure are in excess of \$250 million from this industry alone.

This industry is not only important to my home county but, also plays a large role in the State's economy. Statewide tourism is a \$46 billion dollar industry which employs 429,000 Ohioans. In 2018, Ohio welcomed 222 million visitors.

Representatives, I appreciate the urgency of this bill. The seasonality of this industry must be taken into account. According to the Ohio Travel Association (OTA) in 2018, 66% of the \$21 million in Ohio sales tax from recreation is collected from April through September. The OTA goes on to say the state is losing an average of \$2 million dollars each day that our major attractions are not open.

Cedar Fair, which is headquartered in Sandusky, alone brought in nearly \$17 million dollars in sales and use tax.

Our local amusement and hospitality operators are in the business of risk management. They have long been seeking a date certain on which they can open. They have also been seeking clear guidance as to what health and safety standards will be required of them. Executives from all of these companies have assured me they can and will comply with any and all reasonable public health requirements. I am confident we can reopen these businesses in manner that will put the highest emphasis on guest safety.

Yesterday, (June 3rd, 2020) the Erie County Commissioners, both Republican and Democrat, unanimously supported a resolution asking Governor DeWine to do exactly what this bill does. Allow our local tourism industry to do what they do best, safely welcome people into our community and provide them with a great experience. I want to thank Rep. Swearingen for sponsoring this legislation that is vital to Erie County. I also want to thank the Committee for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

Matt Old
Erie County Commissioner