



Ohio Campground Owners Association, Inc.

PO Box 12278 · Columbus, Ohio 43212

614-221-7748 · Fax 614-221-0756

info@ohiocampers.com www.ohiocampers.com

Privately owned and operated campgrounds serving Ohio's recreational needs

House Bill 355

Proponent Testimony – Chip Hanawalt

October 29, 2019

Chairman Hambley, Vice Chairman Patton, Ranking Member Brown and all members of the House Civil Justice Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony today on House Bill 355. My name is Chip Hanawalt. I am the owner of Sunbury/Columbus North KOA and currently serve as the President of the Ohio Campground Owners Association (OCA). The OCA represents privately owned and operated campgrounds in the State. We are pleased to offer our support to HB 355.

HB 355 provides private campgrounds limited liability protections for inherent risk to camping. This bill applies to private campgrounds. Public campgrounds, like those in state parks, already have certain protections because they are operated by Ohio.

Our campgrounds are privately owned, yet obviously open to the public. Most are family owned and operated, and are multigenerational. I know I hope to pass my business on to my children, who have grown up at the campground, worked the family business and as adults have a part in the everyday operations of the campground. This is our livelihood; our parks carry our blood, sweat, tears and to be in constant threat of a frivolous lawsuit from an obvious risk to camping is very stressful. This bill seeks to add certainty to Ohio law and make clear what is naturally a risk while camping.

Many of the things commonly associated with camping carry risks for the participant: fishing, campfires, hiking, walking the grounds, etc. An owner cannot eliminate those risks and should not be held liable if an injury occurs. Make no mistake, at my business we take safety very seriously. I do my best to make sure our campers are safe, but providing certainty of that is impossible. Most campgrounds are situated on several acres of hilly land and woods with underbrush and rocks. There is a campground not too far from mine that has been sued three times. One of those frivolous suits was brought on because a camper was walking along the woods, tripped over a fallen limb and sprained her wrist. Another campground in Ohio was sued after a woman was running through the open area, stepped into a mole hole along the way and broke her ankle. The same campground was sued again because a hot coal from a campfire flew out and burned a camper's eye.

Passing this bill will provide clarity for our members and for our campers. HB 355 is modeled after legislation enacted to grant these explicit protections for Agritourism businesses. The OCA believes our members' business should be granted those same protections.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to talk with you about HB 355 and I will do my best to answer any questions from the committee.