

**Testimony of Karen Raymore, Executive Director
Hocking Hills Tourism Association
On behalf of the Ohio Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus
Ohio House Commerce and Labor Committee
Proponent of HB 219**

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Dean and Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Karen Raymore and I am the Executive Director of the Hocking Hills Tourism Association. I am here today to testify in support of HB 219 on behalf of the Ohio Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (OACVB).

OACVB is a statewide trade association of Convention and Visitors bureaus representing all communities, large and small, urban and rural across Ohio. We market our areas regionally trying to attract visitors to attend everything from sporting events and theme parks to fishing charters and outdoor hiking in the Hocking Hills. When we market our areas, we also market the local restaurants, wineries, craft breweries and craft distilleries.

For example, one of the craft distilleries in my area is Hocking Hills Moonshine, which is closed on Sundays because they do not have a D-6 permit.

Last year we had 4.5 million visitors in Hocking Hills. We track the traffic at our welcome center and by far our busiest days of the week are Saturday and Sunday. The second busiest day of the week at the Hocking Hills State Park is Sunday. Our cabins have minimum stay requirements so it is very common for visitors to depart on Monday and they are looking for things to do on Sunday. HB 219 will help provide additional experiences to keep those travelers engaged, spending money in our community and creating jobs.

Knowing how much travel takes place in our region on a Sunday, I know that a destination like Hocking Hills Moonshine is losing an opportunity to give tours and sell product. They are also missing the opportunity to create more jobs. I've spoken to the owner Brian St. Clair about this situation. He is in the process of moving his distillery into historic downtown Logan. If the distillery was open on Sundays the impact of his business to the revitalization of our historic downtown would be more substantial. The same would be true for other businesses in the Hocking Hills and communities across the state.

This weekend, we are hosting the Washboard Music Festival, and on June 24 we are opening the new Old Man's Cave visitor center. In July we have our annual Lilyfest which is a great outdoor festival celebrating nature and music set in the beautiful Bishop Educational Gardens. On July 20th, the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, the John Glenn Astronomy Park will host a minute by minute replay of the moon landing. I would like to invite anyone in this room to come to the Hocking Hills and enjoy any of these events. If you come down, please also spend some time in our restaurants and touring our wineries, craft breweries and distilleries.

I appreciate your time, and I am happy to answer questions.