

**Testimony of Andrew W. Herf, Executive Director
Ohio Licensed Beverage Association &
Ohio Spirits Association
before the
Ohio House Commerce & Labor Committee
in support of HB 669
May 28, 2020**

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Dean and Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 669 today.

My name is Andrew Herf and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Licensed Beverage Association, and the Executive Director of the Ohio Spirits Association.

I would like to take a few minutes to explain why the groups I represent support the bill, and I would like to express concern for one of the provisions in the bill.

To begin, we support the measure to make “cocktails to go” a permanent fixture in Ohio. This provision was first adopted as an executive order and has been responsible for saving some of the bars in Ohio—so far. It served as a way to sell inventory, to make enough profit and in some cases to keep a bartender employed and it served as a way for bar owners to stay connected to their customers. But, just because bar owners have reopened, they are not out of the woods yet. They face heightened regulations, and smaller crowd sizes due to social distancing. Many consumers are afraid to go back to their local establishments either because they have other health issues, are elderly or are simply continuing to stay home. Bar owners want to continue to offer those customers the same service going forward that they have become accustomed to over the last several weeks.

The shutdown has been devastating for many small businesses and we are thankful that the DeWine administration was willing to experiment with a creative tool to help businesses survive. The experiment has been successful and we agree that making it a permanent feature in Ohio law can be done safely.

We also support the patio expansion language. Patios were the first places to open before customers were allowed inside establishments. Patios provide a great way to spread customers out and to get people out into fresh air and sunshine. After Memorial Day, many customers prefer to be outside, and HB 669 will streamline the process to allow for patio expansions.

Finally, I would like to address an issue of concern in the bill. The bill allows for direct-to-consumer delivery of spirituous liquor by craft distillers. Direct to consumer shipping by an in-state manufacturer has traditionally been vetted as a standalone bill.

Again, I would like to thank Representative Swearingen and LaRe for introducing HB 669 and for your time as a committee. I am happy to answer questions.