



Ohio Restaurant Association Testimony in Support of HB 669: The Business Expansion and Safety Act

May 28, 2020

Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Dean, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and Members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee:

On behalf of Ohio's 23,000 restaurant and foodservice locations and Ohio's 585,000 restaurant and foodservice employees, the Ohio Restaurant Association appreciates the opportunity to be here today in support of HB 669, the Business Expansion and Safety Act. This timely legislation will give significant and needed flexibility to Ohio's restaurants and the communities we serve. In light of the public health and economic crisis wrought on our state by the COVID-19 pandemic, this legislation is an important and necessary step as Ohio's economy reopens.

Ohio's restaurants are the cornerstones of our communities, and our restaurants and our communities have been devastated by this ongoing crisis. Even as restaurants begin to reopen, the Dine Safe Ohio mandates they are operating under and a dining public that in many instances remains nervous, will lead to a slow recovery. This legislation recognizes these important facts and will give restaurants a better chance to make it through this crisis, emerge strong on the other side, and come back vigorously to help revive Ohio's economic engine and strengthen our communities. 51% of the US food dollar is now spent at restaurants, making restaurants not just an essential part of our economy, but essential to feeding our state, our country and our communities.

Even prior to the coronavirus pandemic, delivery and carry out were becoming more significant to restaurants and consumers. We appreciate Ohio's legislators recognizing that this public health crisis puts an even greater premium on profitable carry out and delivery options and appreciate this legislation codifying and making permanent some temporary changes the Ohio Liquor Control Commission allowed. Restaurants and consumers have acted responsibly and the certainty this legislation provides is important to operators and consumers alike.

This legislation also supports Ohio's communities, giving them tools to support their local businesses and provide further safe opportunities for their citizens to support and enjoy the businesses that make their community vibrant. Outdoor dining is a hallmark of an Ohio summer, showcases our local businesses, and is a visible sign of a vibrant community. Giving communities greater and permanent flexibility (while also letting them keep local control) to expand outdoor dining is a great way the Ohio Legislature can support Ohio businesses and Ohio communities.

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Ohio Restaurant Association