

Margaret Manion, owner of Manny's Sports Tavern & Grille in Sandusky, Ohio  
June 2, 2020

Good morning. My name is Margaret Manion, I own and operate Manny's Sports Tavern & Grille, located in Sandusky, Ohio. Madam Chairperson, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak to this committee today and give you my full support for House Bill 669, that expands the definition of premises and sales for liquor permit holders.

June 18<sup>th</sup> will mark my 20<sup>th</sup> year being in business. We've had mostly a great run with a few bumps along the way. But nothing as devastating as the COVID 19 pandemic. Its financial impact will permanently close many restaurants for good, and has crippled many others like me.

It is important to understand the dynamics of what restaurant owners are dealing with amidst these unprecedented times. When COVID 19 led to the shut down of restaurants in March, many of us were just taking delivery of large quantities of spring inventory and, more specifically, for St Patrick's Day, historically, one of our biggest days. While we were able to use a small portion in carry-out services, we had to absorb huge losses on the perishable food. From that point in time, we have experienced blow after blow of worsening news related to our ability to survive through the COVID pandemic.

At first, we thought maybe this would last a couple weeks. Two weeks turned into four, then nearly nine by the time we were able to provide eat in services once again. During that time, we were glued to the Governor's daily briefing, hoping for any good news pointing to an end. During the shutdown I tended personally to my closed restaurant, laid off the bulk of my 35 employees, and ran a skeleton crew for a carry-out business. Concurrently I applied for loans, redesigned our establishment, spent countless hours cleaning, disinfecting and developing new policies and procedures in anticipation of the re-opening of our business.

Once given the green light to open, we were also given very strict guidelines to follow in order to be allowed to open. We spent hundreds of man hours and thousands of dollars, in order to be compliant with our Departments of Health's orders. In our case, we had an architect review the guidance document and re-draw a compliant table and chair arrangement to address all of the new guidance. We enlisted a shop in Avon, Ohio, to build the necessary partition walls and acrylic glass protection barriers allowing for line of sight viewing accommodating the state Department of Health Guidance Document. We worked around the clock until the project was completed. We opened on time. But with only 50% of our original capacity. So with the approval of our local Health Department Commissioner, I was able to expand our outdoor seating by renting a tent and created a pass-through on our current patio into the tent. This was all done at great expense. But it has abled me to expand our diminished indoor seating to almost original. By allowing service of alcoholic beverages in that area would almost bring me back to full capacity.

Our local Health Commissioner personally indicated to me that our final product was amazing and that we should be proud of our efforts. I am very proud. I'm very proud I'm able to offer an extremely safe socially distanced restaurant.

But many challenges remain. In the first 10 days of re-opening our sales are down 47% from last year. Our costs of operation increased an additional 25% for labor. Fifty percent of my restaurant food sales come from burgers. Their wholesale cost increased 100%. Our wonderful Sandusky location is home of the Erie Islands, Cedar Point and several waterparks including Kalahari, Great Wolf and Castaway Bay. We have the renowned Plum Brook NASA in our backyard, along with many attractions that create millions of prospective clients each day, especially in the summer season. Currently they are all closed.

So, with our costs elevating and the capacity of most restaurants diminishing by more than half, the prospect of many eateries permanently closing shop is high. We need ALL of your help, not just now, but for a long time to come. In our region restaurants contribute massively to the employment of our residents. We generate a considerable amount of sales tax and employment tax, and we are struggling to survive.

Your immediate attention to the bill and the bill's components as they relate to allowing our establishments to IMMEDIATELY offer outdoor seating and liquor sales with food will go a long way to help mitigate the many hurdles we are otherwise facing. I urge each of you to get this bill passed.

In closing, I recently read a quote I would like to share with you:

"The only way that we can live, is if we grow. The only way that we can grow is if we change. The only way that we can change is if we learn. The only way we can learn is if we are exposed. And the only way that we can become exposed is if we throw ourselves out into the open"

We have learned what it will take to safely operate our businesses during this crisis. We have made the changes required. **The passage of this bill will allow thousands of Ohio restaurants the opportunity to serve liquor anywhere on their premises, and provide each of them a better chance to economically recover from this pandemic!**

Thank You