



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

June 4, 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 674. This timely legislation will give additional 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.

This legislation provides for both the expansion of, and a streamlined process for, a local community to create a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (known as a DORA). Importantly, this gives local communities an additional tool 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 and opportunities for our citizens to fully enjoy our communities' downtowns and neighborhoods are hallmarks of an Ohio summer, showcase our local businesses, and are a visible sign of a vibrant community. Giving communities greater and permanent flexibility (while also letting them keep local control) to expand DORAs and outdoor dining is a great way the Ohio Legislature can support Ohio businesses and Ohio communities.

The Sunday brunch has become another staple of a family's weekend. Many Ohio restaurants have embraced serving their community on a Sunday, sometimes just for brunch, and sometimes throughout the day. This legislation's provision to eliminate the need for establishments to procure a separate liquor permit just to serve alcohol on a Sunday is timely and helpful. The current economic and public health crisis puts an even greater premium on maximizing every opportunity for our local businesses to operate more fully and profitably. We appreciate your consideration of this legislation and the Ohio Legislature's support of Ohio's restaurants and the communities we serve.

Tod Bowen, Managing Director of External Affairs and Government Relations
Ohio Restaurant Association