

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State & Local Government Committee. My name is Joe Sodini, I thank you for the opportunity to give our support for HB 621, legislation sponsored by Rep. Wilkin and Cross that will create fairness across all businesses in the state.

We are a small Jewelry business with two operations located in Wilmington and Hillsboro. As an owner, based on the potential unknown health effect of the Covid virus we decided to close our business a few days prior to the Governor's mandate. This was primarily done to protect all of our employees until we could assess the danger we were about to encounter. We have eight employees, six full time and two part time (This does not include my wife and I). We are a family business which includes our son, our daughter and our daughter in law. The health of all our employees must be first and I believe most business owners know that their business will not run without them. We strictly adhered to the Ohio mandate but as time went on we realized that we were losing customers to other businesses that handled similar merchandise. After seeing these stores, it was clear that most of them could not come close to the protection and safe environment we could provide. We felt confident our environment would offer better protection both for our employees and customers than what was offered during the shutdown by our competitors. We missed Mother's Day which is our third largest volume holiday, while others remained open for business. It is important to allow business owners with like products to have the same opportunities to open their business while following all critical protocol protecting their employees and customers. Thank you for your time. I will be glad to answer any questions you have

Joe Sodini, Rome Jewelers