



**Representative DJ Swearingen
89th House District**

**Representative Jeff LaRe
77th House District**

House Bill 669 Sponsor Testimony

Chair Hoagland, Vice-Chair Schaffer, Ranking Minority Member O'Brien, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 669, the Business Expansion and Safety Act. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many of our state's restaurants, bars, breweries and wineries to suffer. The intent of this legislation is to allow these businesses to regain some of the revenue they have lost during this unprecedented time, while also being able to serve their customers and keep Ohioans safe.

This piece of legislation gives these business owners greater flexibility to not only bring in greater revenue during these trying times, but it will also provide customers and employees of these establishments a safer and more social distanced friendly environment. Many protocols have been set in place and we've seen

multiple news reports of restaurants and bars receiving complaints and potential citations for individuals allegedly not following the guidelines. The bill allows for further outside spaces to be available for these establishments, as they would be permitted to utilize an outdoor space on their property that under current law they are not authorized to do so, such as their parking lot, and would also be permitted to expand their premises to an adjacent public or private outdoor area so long as there is written consent. By allowing for this expansion, it lays the foundation to not only protect these places from getting overcrowded, but gives more opportunity for individuals and restaurants to comply with social distancing guidelines while also maximizing their sales.

The legislation also takes into account customer safety by including such precautions as an establishment notifying the Division of Liquor Control and the Ohio Department of Public Safety when they intend to expand their premises, and ensuring the boundaries of the expansion are clearly marked.

The Business Expansion and Safety Act also allows for the delivery of alcoholic beverages using a third party food delivery service that hold an “H” permit. This delivery service will be vital for those establishments who do not have delivery as part of their business model.

We believe that this bill balances the safety of owners, workers, and customers while also aiding our main street businesses in Ohio.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on this piece of legislation. We are happy to take any questions the Committee may have at this time.