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Committees:
Finance – General Government & Agency Review
Subcommittee, Vice Chairman
Transportation, Commerce & Workforce
Energy & Public Utilities
Local Government, Public Safety & Veterans Affairs

Michael A. Rulli
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33rd Senate District

SPONSOR TESTIMONY SENATE BILL 222

Senator Michael A. Rulli

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Chairman Manning, Vice-Chair Brenner, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 222.

This bill is a companion bill to House Bill 242, which will "authorize a person to use an auxiliary container for any purpose and prohibit a municipal corporation, charter counties or limited home-rule townships from imposing a tax or fee on auxiliary containers, and to clarify that the existing anti-littering law applies to auxiliary containers." As defined by the legislation, an auxiliary container is a paper or plastic bag, a can, cup, food service item, container, keg, bottle, or other packaging item designed for consuming, transporting, or protecting merchandise, food, or beverages.

Consumers and businesses deserve rules and regulations that are uniform and easy to understand. Senate Bill 222 provides this clarity and uniformity for practicing commerce in the State of Ohio. This is the same legislation (House Bill 625) that passed out of the house during the last General Assembly, with support of members currently sitting on this esteemed committee. The purpose of this bill is to protect the ability to manufacture recyclable, sustainable products to better ensure a healthy economy in Ohio.

My colleagues in the house and I have worked closely with a wide variety of Ohio and national business associations to draft this legislation. It is supported by the Ohio Beverage Association, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, the Ohio Chemistry Technology Council, the Ohio Council of Retail Merchants, the Ohio Grocers Association, the Ohio Manufacturers' Association, the Ohio Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association, the Ohio Restaurant Association, MillerCoors, NFIB Ohio, the Wholesale Beer and Wine Association of Ohio and the American Progressive Bag Alliance.

These organizations represent thousands of employers and hundreds of thousands of employees in the State of Ohio. These businesses utilize a wide variety of auxiliary containers. Several major industries in Ohio would be negatively impacted by localities unilaterally deciding to implement fees, taxes or even bans on containers.

Cuyahoga County Council recently passed a plastic bag ban, restricting consumer choice and further placing a burden on hard working Ohioans. This will take effect January of 2020, making this legislation ever more urgent. The ban is so excessive that even municipalities within Cuyahoga county (Brooklyn and Independence) have either passed, or introduced legislation to exempt them from this ban. We need to join pro-business states like Florida, Indiana, and North Carolina (among others) and support Senate Bill 222, or face the harmful consequences that damage Ohio's economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today in support of this critical bill, I would be glad to answer any questions from the committee.