



**Senate Bill 222 – Written Testimony
Kristin Mullins, President/CEO
Ohio Grocers Association – November 12, 2019**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Minority Member Maharath, and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veteran Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of Senate Bill 222, legislation that would establish commerce uniformity pertaining to the regulation of auxiliary containers in Ohio.

As President of the Ohio Grocers Association, I proudly represent over 400 food retail, wholesale and supply companies across the Buckeye state. My members range from the largest chain stores to the smallest “mom and pop” independent grocers as well as some convenience stores and of course the food wholesalers who supply these stores.

Recently, we’ve seen a national influx of city and local ordinances pertaining to types of auxiliary containers such as plastic bag fees, taxes and even outright bans. Several municipalities in Ohio have either explored the idea of a fee and/or ban or introduced language. Cuyahoga County and the city of Bexley have both recently passed ordinances to ban single-use plastic bags starting January 2020. Plastic bag fees/taxes and outright bans can pose a significant burden for grocery and retail food establishments. They also impact manufacturers and wholesalers who have existing inventory of branded plastic bags which once a ban goes into effect, they have no use for the inventory and must eat the cost.

Many OGA members operate across multiple municipalities and having varying rules and regulations relating to fees would be a logistical nightmare and prove difficult to manage. We have also seen that these regulations create customer and employee confusion. We are on the front line of the customer experience; employees need to be adequately trained at the checkout in order to promptly adhere to the regulations. Furthermore, without proper education, consumers often associate these fees with the store itself and will simply choose to shop elsewhere. Lastly, the reporting and remittance requirements associated with a plastic bag fee would create devastating drawbacks to our small business’ ability to effectively operate their stores – and in the most challenged of demographics - could even result in store closures.

Senate Bill 222 establishes fixed regulations for the day to day operations of running a retail food establishment. Dictating that the state has sole authority, under Ohio EPA, in matters related to laws on auxiliary containers will provide our members with the much-needed consistency they need to efficiently operate their stores. We commend the leadership of Senator Rulli for their sponsorship of this important legislation and urge your favorable consideration of Senate Bill 222.

