

Boating Associations of Ohio



Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Maharath and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of House Bill 211.

My name is Ken Alvey and I am the past President of the Lake Erie Marine Trades Association (LEMETA) and former Executive Director of the Boating Associations of Ohio (BAO). Our associations welcomes boat dealers, marina operators, watercraft manufacturers, clubs, financial entities, and other water-based organizations.

The members of our organizations have reviewed the provisions of HB 211 and are pleased to offer our support. We thank now former Representative Steve Arndt for his attention to this very real issue and working to explore a solution. I think many people are surprised to hear that someone would abandon a boat. But this happens to our members on a regular basis and the current process of gaining title to a boat in order to remove it from our property takes months and cost our members money out of their own businesses.

People abandon their boats for many reasons. Mostly it happens when the cost to repair the vessel is greater than the value of the boat. A potential client could bring their boat into our business. We review the scope of work and let the owner know the cost, and then we never see them again. Or the owner contracts with us to store their boat in the off season. Summer rolls around and they never return to collect their watercraft. Storage area is limited, and boats left behind when summer starts requires additional management. Our businesses are a) stuck with an unpaid storage bill, and b) stuck with a watercraft we can't do anything with until we go through the laborious task of gaining title under the current law.

HB 211 will streamline that process for our owners. HB 211 still ensures that the owner is given proper notice of our intent and allows them the opportunity to retrieve their property. In fact, during the House process there were questions raised about the ability of bad actors to possibly "game" the system to gain title for financial gain. In order to address these concerns, the bill sponsor worked on a compromise to create additional processes that must be completed for vessels valued over \$10,000.

If the owner does not come forward or respond according the law, the marine business can gain title to the watercraft. Once we have title, we are able to proceed with salvage of the vessel. Again, this process is all paid for at our members' expense. This is a cost on top of the loss we have incurred because of unpaid storage or maintenance bills by the person who abandoned the watercraft.

Many of our members of dealing with the issue of abandoned boats as we speak. These businesses shouldn't have a forfeit marina or storage space for boats that were abandoned. We should be able to fairly remove these junk and abandoned watercraft from our property to make room for our customers.

During consideration in the House, the legislation received 4 hearings. It underwent some modifications which I have highlighted in this testimony. There were no opponents to the legislation, and it passed out of the House of Representatives unanimously.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for your consideration of this legislation and we urge your favorable consideration. I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.