

THE OHIO COUNCIL OF

Retail Merchants

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**Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 65
Senate Ways & Means Committee**

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Good morning Chairman Eklund, Vice Chairman Terhar, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Senate Ways & Means Committee. I am Lora Miller, Director of Governmental Affairs & Public Relations for the Ohio Council of Retail Merchants. I am here today on behalf of a number of our member companies in support of Senate Bill 65, sponsored by Senator Edna Brown, to create an Ohio ENERGY STAR sales tax holiday the first Friday, Saturday and Sunday of April each year. Specifically, the bill would exempt qualifying ENERGY STAR appliances and heating and cooling equipment from state, county and transit sales and use taxes during the three-day holiday period. Thank you for this opportunity.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR program stands alone as the most successful voluntary energy efficiency movement in history. Purchasing ENERGY STAR products reflects a commitment to saving energy and protecting the environment. Behind each blue label is a product that is independently certified to use less energy and cause fewer of the emissions that contribute to climate change. Today, ENERGY STAR is the most widely recognized symbol for energy efficiency in the world. According to their website, since 1992, ENERGY STAR has helped families and businesses save \$362 billion on utility bills, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions by over 2.4 billion metric tons.

There is no question that in addition to the tax savings that consumers would realize by replacing their old, inefficient appliances and heating and cooling equipment, the long-term savings from decreased energy usage resulting in lower utility bills would be very significant. Our only suggestion to improve upon the bill would be to add the category of water heaters to the list of ENERGY STAR tax-exempt items, which has been conveyed to Senator Brown's office.

Our member companies that sell many of the qualifying items include Best Buy, Home Depot, JC Penney, Lowe's, Sears and Wal-Mart, plus a handful of independent appliance stores.

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chairman Terhar and Ranking Member Williams, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today in support of Senator Brown's Senate Bill 65 to create an Ohio ENERGY STAR sales tax holiday. Our thanks to the committee and our special thanks to Senator Brown for her leadership on this important bill. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.