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Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Ohio Senate Ways and Means Committee, I am Fayette County Commissioner Dan Dean, and I am here today to offer support for SB 252 as sponsored by Senator Peterson. This legislation would authorize local elected officers that have levied a hotel lodging excise tax, or a designee of such officers to simultaneously hold the position of officer or member of the board of trustees of a convention and visitors' bureau without constituting incompatible offices.

The whole purpose of a convention and visitors' board is to encourage the public to travel to and support economic enterprises within the county which is a legitimate and substantial public interest of the Board of Commissioners. There is no incompatibility when the Board of Commissioners determines to fund those activities, either when acting as Commissioners or as members of a travel and tourism board. This situation is not unlike an elected county commissioner serving simultaneously as commissioner and as a member of a county land reutilization organization (county land bank). In this case the legislature has provided by state statute that elected county commissioners shall be board members of the land bank along with the county treasurer despite the county commissioners setting the amount of county financial support the private non-profit land bank might receive.

In smaller counties this issue is most important. We struggle to find people who are willing to commit the time to be on these boards. In Fayette County, the travel and tourism board is made up of two township trustees, two county village officials, one official from our only city and one county commissioner. The board members are appointed to one-year terms by each entity. The finances are audited by the State Auditor and all expenditures are public record.

SB 252 is needed to allow counties to work in the public interest and operate in a manner best suited to the individual county's needs. Thank you in advance for your consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.