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Ohio House Civil Justice Committee
Proponent Testimony on House Bill 606
Kristin Mullins, President and CEO, Ohio Grocers Association
May 20, 2020

Chairman Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee – thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 606. The Ohio Grocers Association supports the passage of HB 606 to protect our members and their owners, managers, and employees from lawsuits that might come as a result of the ongoing pandemic.

The Association, representing grocers of all sizes, food wholesalers, manufacturers and distributors, have been serving on the front lines of this crisis from the beginning, remaining open to provide essential services to thousands of customers needing to feed themselves and their families. Our members have instituted a variety of measures, in accordance with state orders and recommendations, such as maintaining social distancing, utilizing additional cleaning protocols, providing for special shopping hours for higher risk customers, and supporting employee wellness policies to keep our employees and our customers safe in our stores.

Despite those efforts, we recognize that litigation over exposure is inevitable for businesses who have remained open during the pandemic. We value the protections this legislation will provide to the retail community, and particularly our members, who put their own safety at risk in order to serve Ohio's families across the state. We are proud to be doing so, and we believe these times merit assurances that we will not be penalized for providing these essential services to our customers. Thank you for recognizing the essential role grocers have played in this emergency.

House Bill 606 is a critical part of the State's response to this unprecedented crisis, offering necessary protections to our store owners from potentially costly and time-consuming litigation, and to the continued reopening of Ohio businesses as we all work to regain our economic stability. We welcome its immediate passage.