



Ohio House Commerce and Labor Committee
Interested Party Testimony, HB 669 (Swearingen, LaRe)
Heritage Ohio
May 28, 2020

Thank you Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Dean, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan, and members of the Commerce and Labor Committee for the opportunity for Heritage Ohio to provide interested party written testimony in support of House Bill 669.

Heritage Ohio is Ohio's statewide downtown revitalization non-profit that has been the coordinating agency for the Ohio Main Street Program since 1997. Currently we manage 22 certified Main Street programs and work with 35 Downtown Affiliates to assist with community revitalization and economic development efforts. We also assist dozens of additional communities with technical assistance through a CDBG grant from the Office of Community Development.

Because of our work across Ohio, we know that restaurants are the anchor businesses driving traffic in our downtown commercial districts. The survival and success of our restaurant industry going forward will impact not only restaurants but are important for the vitality and stability of our other Main Street businesses.

By permitting bars, restaurant, small breweries, micro-distilleries and wineries to easily and quickly expand into outdoor spaces, both public and private, it will help to achieve social distancing while enabling these businesses to come closer to the number of seats required to stay in business. The bill maintains local control, but with an expedited approval process. This is important as we are already into our warmer months, and time is of the essence to save our small, independent restaurants and other businesses. By taking advantage of the outdoors, HB669 will help bring people back to our commercial districts.

With over 22,000 dining and drinking establishments in Ohio, the Ohio Restaurant Association estimates 10% of the Ohio work force is in the food services industry. Heritage Ohio supports the swift passage of HB 669 to help save these Ohio businesses, which are the backbone to our local economies.

In summary, this bill:

1. Will help save local businesses by expanding their service areas to outdoor public and private space.
2. Makes it easier to achieve social distancing while having the business remain economically viable.
3. Expedites the approval process efficiently while allowing for solid local control.

Thank you for your time, and if you have any questions, we can be reached at 614-258-6200.

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