



Bowling Centers Association of Ohio

**529 Windsor Park Drive
P.O. Box 750996
Centerville, Ohio 45475-0996
(937)433-8363 (937)433-2597 fax**



**House Finance Committee
Chairman Scott Oelslager & Ranking Member Jack Cera
Thursday, May 30, 2019
HB 194 – Sports Gaming @ Casinos, Racinos & Fraternal Clubs
Opponent Testimony by
David P. Corey, Executive VP – Bowling Centers Association of Ohio**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Cera & House Finance Committee Members, thank you for this rare opportunity to speak with you in a formal committee setting regarding gaming and specifically sports gaming as proposed in HB 194. As mentioned, my name is David Corey, the Executive Vice President of the Bowling Centers Association of Ohio. BCAO consists of 175 out of the 275 bowling centers in the state of Ohio, and we represent approximately 5,000 bowling center employees.

For those new members of the General Assembly, our efforts to be included in Ohio's gaming programs started back in 1995. Other than on December 13, 2011 and March 10, 2010 - when we testified as interested parties on bills that allowed VLTs at Ohio's Racetracks - 1995 was the last time we testified in a legislative hearing on the gaming issue in Ohio. At that time we suggested (and implored you) that if Ohio expanded gaming, that Ohio's beleaguered small hospitality businesses be part of any expansion plans. So, fast forward 24 years and what has happened? Four casinos monopolize slot machines and table games. Seven horseracing tracks have a monopoly on VLTs (and maybe soon in off-track betting parlors) and 600 fraternal & veteran organizations have electronic charity raffle devices. All are very lucrative and are thriving.

And now here comes sports betting. And where is Ohio's hospitality industry - nowhere mentioned as a participant or partner. Why is this? We don't know - do any of you know? Our members can only surmise that it's due to our lack of political clout (e.g. campaign

donations)? because we just can't compete with the cadre of lobbyists that the casinos and racinos have employed here in Ohio. Who knows, but we are once again respectfully requesting that you consider adding bowling centers as a partner to offer sports betting through the Lottery's KENO Kiosks we already have in our centers.

As you may or may not know, bowling centers have some of the highest grossing lottery KENO locations in the entire state that we have managed very responsibly and safely for years. We found it ironic that the casinos were talking about safety issues last week when they have some serious safety issues – just take a look at the police blotters in those areas and ask local law enforcement about what goes on there when it comes to drug trafficking, prostitution and theft. What's the old saying? "Those in glass houses shouldn't throw stones". Anyway, we just thought it was a little ironic and we sensed you did too. Plus, we are a little confused - If you are going to allow mobile sports betting, it doesn't seem very consistent to exclude current lottery brick and mortar retail locations? Bowling centers will now, more than ever, be at a competitive disadvantage with casinos, racinos and fraternal clubs that have already siphoned many of our customers away and ultimately hurt Ohio's small businesses.

We realize sports betting will not be a big direct money maker for our locations. But our goal (similar to what the casinos stated last week and is even more important to us) is trying to attract and keep our patrons "in their seats". So they buy that extra pop, beer, pizza or sandwich and maybe even bowl a couple of games. We want a "boost" too as the casinos testified last week that they want. Which again, was a little ironic – they have a monopoly on gaming in this state and they need a "boost"? We think you can all agree that Ohio's hospitality industry is the one that really needs the "boost".

All we are asking is to make an attempt to level the playing field a tiny bit. We've already displayed that we are good, solid and successful lottery partners. The examples last week of why current lottery retailers like bowling centers shouldn't be able to participate don't hold water and it was refreshing to hear Chairman Oelslager and Rep Greenspan call the

greedy casinos out with their example of \$100,000 cash bets and phony security claims. If sports betting at lottery retailers who offer KENO have the same financial parameters as KENO, we know it can be successful with minimal issues. Let the Big Boys take the Big Bets and cater to the major gamblers – let us take care of the local casual bettor like we currently do with KENO...and let the state reap the financial rewards that will be better materialized by allowing us to participate. Because as we all know, when the casinos tell us what the financial impact will be they are always right on the money. No, wait, they haven't been since day one when they ran ads promoting their constitutional monopoly would generate thousands of jobs that have come up short. Revenue figures that have been way below their estimates. And even the total number of slot machines they were going to have in Ohio casinos have not been placed. We just don't understand why we keep believing these out of state "carpet baggers" that have lied to us from the very beginning?

The bottom line for Ohio's Hospitality community is this – if not NOW, and if not sports betting, then what and when will the legislature authorize Ohio's primarily family-owned small businesses to be able to participate in Ohio's huge gambling pie? The Big Boys don't want us to ever have a piece of the pie, let alone the scraps that we are asking for in HB 194. They also take pleasure in making this much more confusing than it is in order to keep their monopoly on everything related to gaming in Ohio. Again, our track record on KENO dismisses those arguments, especially since we've been so successful in operating KENO for years.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that if you really want to discuss how Ohio's hospitality industry can help raise \$250 million for the Lottery with minimal cannibalization of current gaming choices, then please invite us back to talk about VLTs in liquor permit establishments.

As always, thank you for your time and I hope you ask some questions that way we'll know you're taking us seriously because our members are really getting discouraged by the lack of attention current Lottery partners like us are receiving and, to tell you the truth, I may not be able to hold them back much longer from going on a KENO strike if they continue to be left out.