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*Advocating for Life, Faith, and Freedom in the Public Square*

To: Members of the State and Local Government Committee

From: Chris Long, Ohio Christian Alliance President

Re: Supporting testimony on H.B. 473 to allow the state motto to be used alongside the state seal

Thank you, Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the State and Local Government Committee for receiving our testimony today in support of H.B. 473, that will allow the state motto to be used alongside the state seal. Adopted in 1959, Ohio's motto is now 61 years old, the result of a lobbying effort of a ten-year-old boy from Cincinnati, Jimmy Mastronardo. Jimmy wrote to the Cincinnati Inquirer pointing out that Ohio was the only one out of 48 states that lacked a motto. He suggested the phrase, "With God all things are possible" from the Bible. After having collected 18,000 signatures in a petition drive, he lobbied the Ohio Legislature for its adoption. Ohioans embraced the motto fully, and the motto was adopted, becoming official on October 1, 1959.

The state motto has survived the test of time. In 1997, as part of the Statehouse renovations and enhancements, Governor Voinovich suggested adding a bronze state seal with the motto to be displayed at the Statehouse. The Capitol Square Review & Advisory Board chose the plaza adjoining the Statehouse. The American Civil Liberties Union filed suit, arguing that the motto violated the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution. The federal court upheld Ohio's motto, and the ACLU backed off its attempt to fight it in court, as they did not like their prospects at the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ohioans have taken encouragement from Ohio's motto in times of difficulty. It has proven the test of time. It has survived in the courts of law and has been favored overwhelmingly by public opinion. Without partiality or bias, the motto continues to be an inspiration to many. In recognition of that, H.B. 473 would give our state motto more exposure, as it would bring clarification in the Ohio Revised Code as to its usage and application, not only with the Ohio state seal, but of all official seals of the state. We fully support the effort by State Representative Smith and the co-sponsors of this legislation. We fully support and endorse H.B. 473, as it will help to showcase and promote Ohio's motto in its mission to be an encouragement to the people of Ohio and beyond.

Thank you, Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, and members of the State and Local Government Committee, for receiving our testimony today.