



Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to give proponent testimony on House Bill 473, which would expressly permit Ohio's state motto to be used as part of the state seal.

The Ohio Constitution specifies that "there shall be a seal of the state, which shall be kept by the governor, and used by him officially; and shall be called "The Great Seal of the State of Ohio."ⁱ The coat of arms of the state is described in [ORC 5.04](#) and outlines contents and inspirations. The coat of arms is the basis of the state seal, mentioned in [ORC 5.10](#). Reproductions of the state seal are only permitted for use by provisions of the Ohio Constitution and the Revised Code. The governor can grant permission to reproduce the seal to permit publication of a reproduction, aid educational or historical programs, and promote economic or cultural development of the state.

The Ohio Revised Code is explicit, for good reason, as to what the state seal shall look like. It states that the size is two and one-half inches in diameter, and that the font is news gothic capitals, but nowhere in the code does it say you may include the state motto. With the ORC being as prescriptive as it is, it creates uncertainty as to whether that disallows the state motto from being used in conjunction with the state seal.

Ohio's state motto was adopted in 1959 following a suggestion from twelve-year old James Mastronardo to use the biblical quote, "With God, All Things Are Possible."ⁱⁱ House Bill 473 will simply permit that the state motto can be displayed with the state seal.

While the state seal has certainly experienced changes over the years, it has always symbolized the same hope reflected in our state motto. While we certainly respect the restrictions for the seal's use, it is my hope that the legislature will see fit to allow it to be paired with the state motto.

Thank you to Representative J. Todd Smith for his work on this legislation. I sincerely appreciate your attention and consideration.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank LaRose". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Frank LaRose
Secretary of State

ⁱ <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/laws/ohio-constitution/section?const=3.12>

ⁱⁱ http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Ohio%27s_State_Motto