



Representative Adam Holmes
97th House District

Representative Jeff LaRe
77th House District

House Bill 282 Sponsor Testimony

Chair Coley, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 282. House Bill 282 seeks to modernize and bring increased integrity to Ohio's charitable gaming laws by legalizing electronic bingo games.

History

Charitable paper bingo was authorized by the Ohio Constitution in 1975. The Ohio Attorney General's office regulates charitable gaming and oversees the issuance of gaming licenses. Organizations that are permitted to conduct charitable bingo include veteran organizations such as VFWs and American Legion posts, fraternal organizations, and 501(c)(3)s. By permitting electronic bingo to be played

at any facility with a license to conduct “old school” charitable bingo, licensed organizations will be provided a legally supported transition to new gaming forms.

The revenues from charitable bingo go to fantastic causes such as to families of fallen Westerville officers, Ohio disaster relief, veterans’ wheelchair games, and to the Wright Patterson Airmen & Family Readiness Center. Funds have also been used to support veterans struggling with PTSD, homelessness, and severe medical issues.

Modernization

House Bill 282 would allow charitable organizations the option to offer both paper and electronic formats for instant bingo. This bill does not expand or create new gaming in Ohio. House Bill 282 also further defines “slot machines” to not include electronic instant bingo since they are played and regulated differently. Precedence for House Bill 282 can be found in states that have already legalized electronic bingo including Kentucky, Virginia, Minnesota, New Hampshire and North Dakota. There is also evidence that the introduction of electronic bingo gaming will both boost revenues for the licensed organizations and attract younger members. Therefore, in passing House Bill 282 we can support veteran and non-profit organizations, and empower them to make an even greater impact on their community.

Integrity

The bill would also address the security and integrity of electronic instant bingo devices. As the regulator of charitable gaming, the Ohio Attorney General would be responsible for managing the state's electronic instant bingo. Not just any organization would be allowed to provide these devices as they need to be licensed by the Attorney General's office and be in good standing with the IRS.

Additionally, the devices will help prevent the stealing or misappropriation of funds, and each machine will record all sales and prizes. Criminal penalty is provided in House Bill 282 for any individual who uses these devices outside that of the scope of practice as defined by the Attorney General.

Ending Remarks

There was no opponent testimony submitted to the House Finance Committee, and the bill passed out of the House by an overwhelming bipartisan majority. It is time to bring charitable gaming into the 21st century, and House Bill 282 would bring many great benefits to our veteran's, fraternal, and 501(c)(3) organizations and the charitable causes they support.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 282. We are happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.