

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON S.B. 308

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written remarks in support of S.B. 308, a bill to provide qualified civil liability to Ohio businesses, healthcare providers, and their employees during and after the COVID-19 government-declared disaster.

By way of background, the Ohio Business Roundtable (OBRT) was established in 1992 for one sole purpose: to improve Ohio's business climate. Since its inception, the OBRT has worked with Ohio's governors and legislative leaders to make Ohio more business-friendly and more competitive both nationally and internationally. The Roundtable is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization comprised of chief executive officers of many of Ohio's largest, most successful companies. Because of the collective expertise and insights of OBRT members, the Roundtable is uniquely capable of bringing solutions to improve Ohio's economic vitality and ensure that Ohio remains the ideal state in which to live, work and succeed.

Our organization comes before you today to emphasize the need for this body to address liability protections for employers during the COVID-19 disaster. This pandemic has been challenging on many fronts, threatening both lives and livelihoods. As businesses across the state begin to reopen their doors, the specter of potential lawsuits is unfortunately very real for our members. Over the course of the past month, we have already seen the emergence of liability threats against businesses stemming from COVID-19, and we only expect that trend to continue as Ohio moves to fully reopen its economy.

Our membership is unique in that it encompasses businesses from a wide variety of industries. From healthcare, manufacturing, financial services, retail and services, energy, telecommunications and more, the threat of litigation stemming from this crisis is front and center on all our CEOs' minds. Our members do not seek protection from gross negligence. They only ask that this committee stand with the businesses on the front line of this crisis by providing protections from the frivolous lawsuits that many will undoubtedly face under the status quo. Inaction will only delay the long economic recovery that lies ahead.

The Ohio Business Roundtable applauds Senator Matt Huffman and Senate President Larry Obhof for making business liability protection a priority for this body. And we applaud this committee, and you, Mr. Chairman, for your thoughtful deliberation on this issue which effects businesses of all sizes throughout our state. While no bill is perfect, we believe S.B. 308 is a huge step forward at a time when our Members' resources are stretched very thin. We believe

this bill represents yet another opportunity for Ohio to lead on an issue that has captured national attention, and which is so important to the economic well-being of our state.

Thank you for allowing the Ohio Business Roundtable to provide testimony in support of S.B. 308. We respectfully ask that the Committee approve this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Michael McLean
Director of Policy
Ohio Business Roundtable