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**Written Testimony in Support of SB301
Senate Judiciary Committee
May 13, 2020
Susan Jagers, Ohio Poverty Law Center**

Chair Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, and Ranking Minority Member Thomas, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 301. We appreciate Senators Manning and Wilson sponsoring this legislation to give the Attorney General more tools to deal with price gouging during a state of emergency.

The Ohio Poverty Law Center's mission is to reduce poverty and increase justice by protecting and expanding the legal rights of Ohioans living, working, and raising their families in poverty. We work closely with the legal aid offices across Ohio.

Price gouging occurs when sellers charge excessively higher prices for products and services during emergencies. Attorney General Yost has reported that his office has received more than 1,000 complaints in the last two months. Yet, he has limited authority to protect consumers from sellers charging these excessive prices. Recent complaints have involved milk, eggs, toilet paper, and hand sanitizer.

Among the hardest hit by the current health crisis are those living paycheck-to-paycheck, working low-wage jobs in the restaurant or service industry, and parents who need to stay at home with children and can no longer work. With the job and income losses, many are applying for unemployment compensation or benefits for the first time. With every penny needed to keep a roof over their heads or food on the table, those struggling financially are most harmed by price gouging for food and basic consumer goods. These individuals have the least ability to shop around or search online and can end up paying higher prices for necessities like milk, eggs, and toilet paper.

More than 30 states have laws to protect consumers from price gouging. We ask that you support Senate Bill 301 to give Ohio's Attorney General additional tools to protect Ohio consumers during a state of emergency.

The nonprofit National Consumer Law Center® (NCLC®) joins this testimony and works for economic justice for low-income and other disadvantaged people in the U.S. through policy analysis and advocacy, publications, litigation, and training.