



**Sub. Senate Bill 308**  
**Written Testimony of Angela Meleca**  
**Ohio Citizens for the Arts**  
**June 2, 2020**

Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee – thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony on Substitute Senate Bill 308. My name is Angela Meleca, and I am the Executive Director of Ohio Citizens for the Arts. Ohio Citizens for the Arts is a member-driven, non-profit organization that helps cultivate the arts in Ohio. Our mission is to be an advocate for our more than 300 members across the state, which includes significant arts and cultural institutions as well as individual artists.

Ohio Citizens of the Arts supports Sub. S.B. 308 in its current form with its inclusion of non-profit organizations.

In Ohio, the arts are a \$41 Billion industry that employs nearly 300,000 people. In Columbus alone, the arts provide 60,000 jobs and more than \$3 Billion in wages to our citizens. The industry, when healthy, is a catalyst for economic and cultural growth. In addition to tangible economic benefits, our members provide services that draw tourists, educate the young, and rehabilitate those in need. Unfortunately, the arts are not immune to the economic effects of the virus and subsequent mass gathering orders. Based on recent survey data, OCA can confidently predict the losses due to the pandemic to Ohio artists and art organizations to be over \$100 million a month. Across the state, great institutions furloughed staff due to the massive loss in revenues.

Although the losses are significant, the industry is capable of a strong recovery over time. We believe we can achieve that recovery safely and securely for employees, guests, and all stakeholders.

Our members have worked tirelessly to develop best practices and make the proper adjustments to adhere to CDC and state guidelines. Even working with a restricted budget, our members have been fighting every day to ensure that their staff and patrons are in the safest environment possible. Unfortunately, these efforts could all be undercut by the onslaught of Covid-19 related lawsuits. And without the protection offered in Sub. S.B. 308, civil litigation has the potential to be an insurmountable obstacle in returning to business by providing businesses like ours with limited Covid-19 related lawsuit protections. Sub. S.B. 308 allows our members to focus on providing the best and safest experience for employees and guests. Our members are facing dire economic circumstances and unprecedented uncertainty; the constant threat of litigation would only add to the severity of the losses.



Page Two  
Ohio Citizens for the Arts  
Sub S. B. 308

We believe that Sub. S.B. 308 is appropriately narrow in scope and limited in time. We do not think those who act irresponsibly should have a free pass against liability. Our members, who are working in good faith and following the guidelines established, would like to have confidence that they will not be unfairly penalized for trying to do the right thing. Our members want to return to doing what they do best: inspiring, educating, and illuminating our communities.

For these reasons, we urge you to support Sub. S.B. 308. On behalf of Ohio Citizens for the Arts, I would like to thank you for your consideration of this testimony.