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Diane V. Grendell, State Representative
Ohio's 76th House District

June 10, 2020

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to bring before you House Bill 606. We're living in an historic time in our nation's history. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a widespread impact on virtually every aspect of our lives, creating health and economic uncertainty in many ways.

One of the ways that uncertainty manifests itself is in the realm of civil liability...which brings us to House Bill 606.

House Bill 606 generally grants a person providing services for businesses and operations civil immunity for injury, death or loss to person or property caused by the transmission of COVID-19. This is a critically important common sense bill that will give many Ohioans the peace of mind they deserve.

Think about this: Frontline medical professionals are putting their own health at risk in an effort to help others. Businesses large and small are weighing how best to operate in this uncertain time. The list goes on. Ohio needs a flourishing economy, not a flurry of COVID-19 lawsuits.

Let me be clear on this point as well: The bill DOES NOT provide immunity for people doing the wrong thing. It does not provide immunity for those acting with malicious purpose...it does not provide immunity for those acting recklessly or in bad faith.

But if you're a home owner, a small business owner, a first responder, a health care professional trying to do the right thing, House Bill 606 will give you greater certainty and peace of mind.

I should note the bill applies to conduct during the period from the date of the Governor's Executive Order, 2020-01D, issued on March 9, 2020, declaring a state of emergency due to COVID-19, through December 31, 2020.

During our work in the House, this legislation received widespread support from the business community, including stakeholders from the health care, hospitality and insurance industries and more.

Our local government partners – the County Commissioners Association of Ohio, Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association, Ohio Municipal League, Ohio Mayor’s Alliance and Ohio Township Association – backed the bill as well.

I’d like to touch briefly on a COVID-19 workers’ compensation amendment that is included in the bill.

The workers’ compensation amendment gives a limited presumption that employees in the health care industry and the restaurant industry contracted COVID-19 at work. The presumption expires on December 31, 2020, like the rest of the bill.

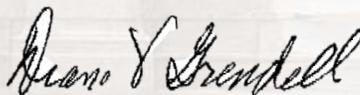
Again, it’s important to emphasize the entire bill is in response to the unprecedented pandemic we face, recognizing the need for immunity for businesses while at the same time recognizing employees in certain industries receiving that immunity were on the front lines of COVID-19 exposure.

House Bill 606 passed by a vote of 84-9.

On that note, I should point out the bill contains an emergency clause, without which the bill will not be effective until late September at the earliest.

I urge your support for House Bill 606 and am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Diane V. Grendell
State Representative
76th Ohio House District