



Ohio Restaurant Association Testimony in Support of Amended Substitute HB 606

June 24, 2020

Chair Eklund, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of Ohio's 23,000 restaurant and foodservice locations and Ohio's 585,000 restaurant and foodservice employees, the Ohio Restaurant Association appreciates the opportunity to be here today in support of Amended Substitute House Bill 606. In light of the public health and economic crisis wrought on our state by the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of dining at restaurants for more than two months, this legislation is an important and necessary step as Ohio's economy continues to reopen.

Ohio's restaurants are the cornerstones of our communities, and our restaurants and our communities have been devastated by this ongoing crisis. Nearly one month after Ohio restaurants were allowed to reopen, eight out of 10 Ohio dining establishments are back to serving guests in dining rooms and on patios, but the devastating effects of the initial closing remain difficult to overcome – as most owners are still operating at less than 50% of sales versus the prior year and 79% don't expect to breakeven financially in 2020. This legislation recognizes these important facts and will give restaurants a better chance to make it through this crisis, emerge strong on the other side, and come back vigorously to help revive Ohio's economic engine and strengthen our communities.

Ohio's restaurants have always been leaders in food, employee, and guest safety, and are committed to reopening our dining rooms and patios safely to feed our communities, put hundreds of thousands of restaurant workers back to work, and help revive Ohio's economic engine. Despite all of the health and safety efforts they are adhering to, as outlined in our [Ohio Restaurant Promise](#), Ohio restaurants are concerned about the threat of potential litigation. This legislation will help restaurants and all Ohio businesses more confidently take all of the necessary steps to reopen and operate safely. 51% of the US food dollar is now spent at restaurants, making restaurants not just an essential part of our economy, but essential to feeding our state, our country and our communities.

The current economic and public health crisis puts an even greater premium on maximizing every opportunity for our local businesses to operate fully, profitably, and safely. We appreciate your consideration of this legislation and the Ohio Legislature's support of Ohio's restaurants and the communities we serve.

Tod Bowen, Managing Director of External Affairs and Government Relations
Ohio Restaurant Association