

**Testimony of
Joe Hollabaugh, Director of Government Affairs
Ohio Licensed Beverage Association
before the
Ohio House Commerce & Labor Committee
March 10, 2021**

Chair Stein, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan, and members of the Ohio House Commerce and Labor Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as a proponent of HB 46.

My name is Joe Hollabaugh, and I am the Director of Government Affairs for the Ohio Licensed Beverage Association, representing bars and taverns in Ohio. On behalf of the businesses in our group, we support HB 46 and we thank Representatives Miller and Carruthers for introducing the bill. Furthermore, we appreciate the outpouring of support for an industry that has been devastated by the pandemic from customers, the administration, the Ohio Department of Commerce and especially, the Ohio General Assembly.

Beginning on March 15, 2020 all bars and restaurants were ordered closed at 9:00 PM. Two months later, on May 14, 2020 establishments were permitted to open patios, and on May 21 indoor dining returned with social distancing measures in place. At the end of July, Liquor Control Commission Rule 80 was passed, limiting the hours of operation to include a 10:00 PM last call. At the end of November, the emergency rule lapsed and was immediately followed by a 10:00 PM statewide curfew that applied to customers. In February, the curfew was fully lifted.

Currently, there are no curfews or time restrictions on hours for on-premise alcohol retailers, so we can finally assess the total loss of time for bar owners. The formula is different based on whether the establishment has Sunday sales and whether the business has a patio, but the average amount of time lost was 1,987.5 hours. To put that in perspective, a 9-5 employee with a standard 2 weeks vacation works 2,000 hours per year. Our members have lost a year's worth of business.

Unfortunately, simply adding up the lost hours does not paint a complete picture of the dollars lost. Not every hour is the same. 11:00AM on a Tuesday is worth less money to a bar than 11:00PM on a Friday—the hours lost were the golden hours. Furthermore, when the businesses are open, they are operating at between 40% to 60% of the capacity that they had before the outbreak, and they continue incur additional expense sanitizing, purchasing PPE and modifying their building with Plexiglas dividers and even installing ultraviolet lights to kill pathogens on surfaces.

In short, few businesses have been hit harder than bars and restaurants by shutdowns. A one-time liquor license renewal extension would be incredibly helpful to the industry.

While we welcome and appreciate any extension, we would also point out that it is also in our interest to hold the Division of Liquor Control harmless. During the height of the outbreak, the Division of Liquor Control shifted much of their focus to patio expansions and to creating DORAs. Their efforts directly saved thousands of Ohio businesses. They are also working to streamline their internal process to approve new licenses by updating from a paper system created in the 1950's to an online platform. We would simply request that the funding used to support these important processes is protected.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, I happy to answer questions.