



TO: Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Chairman - Matt Dolan
Vice Chair -Theresa Gavarone
Ranking Minority Member - Sykes
Members of the Committee

From: Belinda Judson, Executive Director - NATO of Ohio

Memorandum in Support of SB 109 –Grants to Businesses, Local Fairs, Child Care Providers, Veterans Homes and Indoor Entertainment Venues

On behalf of the members of NATO of Ohio, an affiliated association of the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO), we would like to convey our support of Ohio-SB 109 in order to provide grants to businesses, local fairs, childcare providers, veterans’ homes and indoor entertainment venues.

Our members are movie theater owners who have locations all across the Great State of Ohio. The movie theater industry is facing unprecedented economic disruption due to the pandemic.

The cinema industry was among the first to close and will be among the last to recover—but only if we can survive the interim. Not all of our members have been able to procure relief funds and the grants to entertainment venues would provide critical funds to help cinemas bridge the pandemic.

Before this crisis upended our thriving industry, movie theaters generated approximately \$15 billion in revenue every year nationally and more than **\$1 billion in Ohio**. Because of the pandemic, our industry has seen revenues plunge by more than 75 percent—threatening the vast majority of the industry’s 150,000 jobs and closure or bankruptcy of more than 70 percent of independent movie theaters in the coming weeks and months.

While movie theaters can now operate throughout most of the country, state-mandated capacity limits and a lack of new movie releases are insurmountable barriers to recovery. Never mind that prevailing research shows movie going is quite safe when NATO’s CinemaSafe protocols are followed and there have been no COVID-19 outbreaks traced to cinemas throughout the world for the entirety of the pandemic.

At a time when many small towns in Ohio are in economic crisis for reasons beyond the pandemic, movie theaters are needed now more than ever. From Main Street to urban centers, cinemas invigorate opportunity zones, revitalize neighborhoods, drive foot traffic to local businesses, and foster cultural vibrancy. The grants would throw a critical lifeline to movie theater owners so they can contribute to Ohio’s economic recovery and continue creating employment opportunities in communities across the state where jobs can be few and far between.

Our industry is desperate and needs help. Movie theaters will play an important role in rebuilding Ohio’s economy and once again bring the shared cultural experience of movie going to our communities.

Thank you again for your attention to this critical matter.