



City of Celina, Ohio

ONE OF THE BEST 100 SMALL TOWNS IN AMERICA

Jeffrey S. Hazel
Mayor

June 4, 2024

Chairwoman Abrams
Vice Chair Williams
Ranking Member Brown
Members of the Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee

Re: HB 245, Adult Cabaret Act

Honorable Members:

Thank you for allowing me to submit this letter in support of HB 245, the Adult Cabaret Act, which is currently receiving testimonies and written correspondence.

I am a 4th Term Mayor of the City of Celina and have understanding of community. Further, I am also a husband, father of 4 children, and 7 grandchildren. I currently serve as a Board Member of the Celina Planning Commission, Mercer County Health District Advisory Board, Mercer County EMS, an Executive Board Member of the Ohio Mayor's Association, Celina-Mercer County Chamber of Commerce, a member of Celina Rotary and West Ohio Christian Chamber of Commerce, and a business owner in Celina with both manufacturing and retail operations. My wife and I currently employ 17 persons.

For the past 4 years, our community was chosen to host a Small Town Pride event in our lake front Park in June during Pride Month. For the last 2 years, the local Pride event organization has hosted a Drag Show for adults and children of all ages to watch with uninhibited and uncensored views. While this event continues to result in divisive community reactions, the ultimate concern is how to protect our children from exposure to obscene and lewd performances, and adult imagery.

While I am an unswerving supporter of the 1st Amendment of the United States Constitution, I also firmly believe there are limits to the "freedom of expression" to juveniles who are not only unable to vote, but are not capable of mature analysis of such adult-style performances. Celina City Council and Administration were provided a video that was taken in 2022 for the Drag Show that occurred where Adults and children alike handed "dollar bills" to drag performers – presumably as a "vote" for their favorite performer, which is akin to "tucking" bills at an adult strip/dance club. One such performer gave a performance in which he twerked, thrust his hips, and gyrated on the ground where he revealed a tight-fitting thong that was displayed with his butt cheeks exposed for all to see. Although Celina has local legislation that would have made such a performance a violation of local law, Council and Administration did not receive the video for nearly 10 months after it occurred. Additionally, a local church group retained an investigator that found 2

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Drag Queen performers scheduled for the 2023 show as having recent arrest records, one of which was for prostitution.

I realize all people can go online to sites such as YouTube, Instagram, or Snapchat to view any level of pornographic or sexually-suggestive content with virtually no filter, but if we are truly serious about protecting the innocence of children in their formative years, then I urge you to support HB 245 to prevent such mature themes from being held in public places. HB 245 needs to be enacted at the earliest opportunity to help protect our children's innocence and prevent exposure to that which is only appropriate for adults.

Celina is fortunate to have 3 parks, totaling 135 acres that contain baseball/softball and soccer fields, basketball courts, multiple playgrounds, zip lines, shelter houses, walk paths, community pool, and a Splash Pad for our community and the thousands of visiting family, friends, and tourists. Our Bryson Park District is located on the north shore of Grand Lake that serves our city of nearly 11,000 residents. We have strong family ties and values that are important throughout our community and our parks and other public spaces should be safe spaces for our children.

Freedom of expressions through adult performances and adult imagery are certainly protected under the 1st Amendment, but need to be in adult establishment where minors are not present. Protecting children from exploitation and the robbing of their innocence, whether mental or physical, is a matter of utmost importance.

Thank you for your service to all citizens of Ohio and your time and consideration today of my written testimony in support of HB 245.

Serving Others,

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