



Chair John, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan and all members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding a provision included in House Bill 238 on behalf of the Greater Ohio Showmen's Association (GOSA). My name is Eric German and I serve as GOSA's Executive Board Liaison & Communications Director. The GOSA is a non-profit organization made up of 450+ members in the outdoor amusement industry. Our members service all the county fairs in the state of Ohio as well as other festivals and community events. GOSA members are family owned & operated businesses and earn their living providing enjoyment to others.

Our members are primarily in 3 categories of business: food concessions, games, and amusement rides. It is our amusement ride members that bring us here today. All amusement rides in the state are permitted and inspected by the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Ride Safety Division. This is a critically important public protection process. Our ride company members value the safety of our customers and understand why the agency takes on this inspection role. A proposal to dramatically decrease the fees for inflatable rides will have severe effects on the financial stability of the ride safety division.

Make no mistake, our member businesses don't welcome paying fees for this program either but understand why it is in the interest of public safety to do so. In the most recent budget process, a provision was added to allow the Division to charge ride companies for the supplemental inspections required under Tyler's law, the ride safety law passed in the wake of the tragic accident at the Ohio State Fair. While not ideal for our members to incur this additional expense, we do understand that the Department cannot be expected to absorb the cost of the extra inspection and inspectors' time. Our members have also seen increases in our operating cost because of the recent changes to the ride safety laws. We have incurred additional costs of contracting with professional engineers to certify and attest to repairs maintenance for the inspectors. These are cost an inflatable ride operator are not likely to incur.

From our understanding, the proposal included in Substitute House Bill 238 would cost the Division roughly \$500,000 annually and result in a reduction of up to 4 ride inspectors. During the pandemic, when all our ride companies were shut down and prohibited from operating, the Department was forced to make the difficult decision to reduce the number of inspectors they employ. We have just seen the division return to full team and we cannot let this go backwards. A reduction in inspection staff will lead to a backlog of inspections. This could result in a delay of operation for our members, and we can foresee fairs and festivals opening without the rides being cleared to operate. We are not able to operate rides in Ohio without the required inspections and clearance. For this reason, the Ohio Fair Managers Association is also concerned with the proposed changes in HB 238.

We ask this committee to remove the changes to permitting and inspection fees for inflatable rides from House Bill 238. Thank you for your consideration of this perspective.