



Outdoor Advertising Association of Ohio

Excellence in Outdoor, Excellence in Community

Testimony of Chris Avondet, President of Outdoor Advertising Association of Ohio

Regarding Governor's Bill No. 86

Greetings to the members of the committee, Chairman Rulli, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member DiMora, and members of the Senate General Government Committee.

My name is Chris Avondet, President of the Outdoor Advertising Association of Ohio (OAAO) and Vice President of Lamar Advertising Company of Columbus, OH. Along with me today are several members of our Association. The Outdoor Advertising Association of Ohio is comprised of 22 billboard companies across the state. Our membership includes national chains such as Lamar Advertising Company & OUTFRONT Media, along with a number of Independent Operator's, which are primarily family run companies such as Norton Outdoor, Key-Ads, Cleveland Outdoor, Barnes Advertising, Kessler Outdoor, Porter Advertising, Lind Media, and Nauman Outdoor.

My testimony is not meant to take a position on the appropriateness of legalizing recreational marijuana in Ohio, but rather I want to focus on how this bill overly restricts the free speech rights of local businesses and the rights of their owners and operators, goes too far in prohibiting advertising on billboards entirely, and circumvents the normal rulemaking process. I also want to offer our help in providing data that can accomplish the goals of the Committee, without the overreach.

In addition to national chains, our members provide advertising services to numerous local businesses, including coffee shops, auto repair facilities, plumbers, special attractions, tourism industries, and many others. These local businesses rely on advertising services to compete in the marketplace. Broad advertising restrictions on small business operators puts our local business people at a disadvantage.

Our members are an integral part of the communities they serve and provide countless Public Service Announcement (PSA) opportunities to local governments, nonprofits, and community organizations. In fact, we have partnered over the years with the state on PSA's for Drug Take Back Day, Elder Abuse Month, Save the Dream Home Ownership, over \$1.5 million in free advertising during the COVID pandemic, and most recently, a \$500,000 campaign for the launch of the America 250 Ohio campaign. Our association members desire to be good corporate citizens and give back where we can.

Our members oppose the proposed broad prohibition on billboard advertising in this bill. We understand the concerns that have been raised regarding public safety and protecting children from exposure, however, Ohio already has strong and effective laws addressing alcohol advertising on billboards, especially in relation to schools, playgrounds, and other public spaces to protect children (Ohio Administrative Code 4301:1-1-44 Section D (copy attached)). Additionally, you'll notice these restrictions only apply to Outdoor Advertising and do not apply to on-premise/retail advertising. Moreover, our members have substantial self-imposed community standards rules in place promoting appropriate creative messages and where they can be displayed to avoid targeting underage populations.

Finally, the statute already has in place the authority for the Department of Commerce to promulgate rules relative to issues such as advertising. We ask that you allow that process to work and allow our industry to develop common sense regulations that ensure public safety and protect children in the process.

If you would be interested in working with us in some way to address any concerns, we will be available at your request.

I thank you for your time and this opportunity to speak.