

April 29, 2025

Proponent Testimony – Ohio House Bill 161

Presented to the House Development Committee

Tiffany Gerber, Executive Director – Holmes County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau

Date: Tuesday, April 29th, 2025

Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and esteemed members of the House Development Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony in support of House Bill 161.

My name is Tiffany Gerber and I am the executive director of the Holmes County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau, also known as Visit Amish Country.

Our organization supports HB 161 as it would require short-term rental properties, regardless of size, to collect and remit all applicable lodging and sales taxes, offering parity in the collections across the lodging industry.

In Holmes County, we see over 1 million visitors a year equaling over 4 million visits. Tourism is one of our largest industries. While our board of commissioners has already lowered the minimum number of rooms for required collection to one, we recognize and support the fact that all Ohio counties would benefit from a state-wide consistency for required collections.

In Holmes County, our annual lodging tax collection total for 2024 was just over \$1.2 Million dollars. Of the total collected, the amount collected from properties with less than five rooms was nearly 14% of total collections. This was money collected from travelers visiting our county and remitted to our county auditor. It is important to note that this is not a financial burden to the lodging properties but a pass-through. It is also important to note that we, as the designated destination marketing organization, take our responsibility as stewards of the funds collected very seriously and use those funds to promote our destination to bring more visitors, and positively impact the community's economy.

We believe that all lodging properties should be held to the same standards and regulations including tax collection, safety, and local laws and regulations. Recognizing any property offering transient lodging as a business and requiring collection, levels the playing field for all lodging properties regardless of size and ultimately benefits those properties as it allows additional promotion of each destination, increases the sales tax for all Ohio communities, and ultimately supports local infrastructure and services.

The passing of HB 161 will also ensure consistent policy as well as transparency and accountability for lodging operators. It is also important to note that this pass-through tax is used to generate economic growth and, simply put, this money is used to generate money.

On behalf Holmes County and its tourism industry, I respectfully urge your support of House Bill 161. Thank you for your time and for recognizing travel and tourism as an economic driver in Ohio.

Respectfully,

Tiffany Gerber, Executive Director
Holmes County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau