



**HB 344– Testimony
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Ohio Grocers Association
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Chairman Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments in support of HB344.

As President of the Ohio Grocers Association, I proudly represent food retail, wholesale and supply companies across the Buckeye state. My members include the smallest “mom and pop” stores, independent grocers as well as some convenience stores and of course the food wholesalers who supply these stores. Ohio’s independent community grocers contribute over \$13 billion dollars in sales, over 53,000 direct jobs and \$1.5 billion in direct wages, as well as over \$1.5 billion in total taxes.

Lottery sales are a critical component to many of the businesses and stores OGA represents as an organization and helps draw foot traffic throughout our operations. Recent data shows over seven hundred grocery store locations engaged as lottery retail agents and generated over \$400 million dollars of sales over the course of the year. Additionally, our member companies received over \$27 million dollars 'worth of commissions, from base, cashing ratios or winning tickets sold. We highlight these numbers not only to show the importance of our relationship with the Lottery Commission, but also the importance our brick-and-mortar retailers provide in generating revenue for our education system and the state. We are proud to partner with the Ohio Lottery commission to serve as agents to provide a safe, regulated, and accessible product to consumers across the Buckeye state.

We support HB344 because it builds upon the existing Lottery infrastructure with expanded Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs) options for brick-and-mortar businesses. These expanded options should be as inclusive as possible to ensure each business that chooses to offer a retail option under any new legislative requirements, be given the opportunity to participate. Our members are accustomed to and well equipped to handle a wide variety of regulated and rigid enforced experiences. Expanded VLT experiences implemented in states such as Georgia and Illinois, for example, allowed retailers to responsibly grow revenue for the state and businesses, without cannibalizing current gaming operations. We believe a similar gaming approach detailed in HB 344 will allow the current gaming ecosystem to grow, leading to increased outcomes for the state and retail businesses.

We applaud Representatives Dovilla and Manning for their leadership and sponsorship of this important legislation, and we urge support from the committee.

Thank you for your time and consideration.