

Statement of Position in Support of H.B. 344

Submitted to the Ohio House Finance Committee

Re: Electronic Instant Bingo and Lottery Terminals

Chair Stewart and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully submit this written testimony in support of House Bill 344, which seeks to authorize and regulate electronic instant bingo and lottery terminals in Ohio.

The experience of neighboring states—most notably Illinois—demonstrates the substantial public and economic benefits of a well-regulated video gaming terminal (VGT) industry. Since its implementation in 2012, Illinois’s Video Gaming Act has generated over \$2 billion in tax revenue for the state and participating municipalities. These funds have helped support critical local services, infrastructure improvements, and public safety efforts, all without raising general taxes.

Key benefits include:

- **Local Economic Development:** VGTs have revitalized small businesses, especially bars, restaurants, and fraternal organizations, by creating a new and stable revenue stream.
- **Job Creation:** The industry supports thousands of jobs, including technicians, route operators, and compliance staff, while indirectly supporting local hospitality workers.
- **Robust Oversight:** Illinois’s system includes stringent licensing, monitoring, and responsible gaming measures, ensuring transparency and minimizing potential for abuse.

Ohio has the opportunity to mirror this success by adopting a similar regulatory framework. A carefully crafted VGT program will provide a sustainable source of revenue to local governments and businesses while offering a safe and controlled form of entertainment to adult consumers.

For these reasons, I encourage your favorable consideration of H.B. 344.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick E. Heidner