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To: Chairman Brian Stewart
Vice-Chairman Michael Dovilla
Ranking Member Bride Rose Sweeney
House Finance Committee

From: Ryan M. Folz
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Chairman Stewart, Vice-Chairman Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and esteemed members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Ryan Folz, and I am testifying today in strong opposition to House Bill 476 on behalf of the Center for Christian Virtue, Ohio's largest Christian Public Policy organization.

At first glance, HB 476 might appear to be a small, technical change to Ohio's charitable gaming laws. But in reality, this bill opens a significant new frontier for gambling in our state by authorizing online raffles under the Charitable Gaming Law and fundamentally changing what most would consider the nature of charitable raffles. By allowing digital platforms to sell electronic tickets and randomly select winners through their platforms, this bill effectively brings internet gambling into Ohio homes and communities disguised under the banner of charity. Let's not kid ourselves here, raffles are a form of gambling, and the same tactics that drive the profits of predatory gambling companies will also be used in raffles when given an online platform. When you take the community friendly idea of a local raffle, and give that same non-profit the ability to expand online, this friendly idea of a raffle turns into something entirely different.

Our state has spent years trying to draw a clear line between charitable fundraising and commercialized gambling. This bill blurs that line beyond recognition. When raffles move online, the local, community-based accountability that traditionally keeps charitable gaming in check disappears. A church fish fry raffle or a local fire department fundraiser operates within the community it serves – but an online raffle could reach anyone, anywhere in the state, with little practical oversight. That opens the door to fraud, addiction, and abuse of charitable status by bad actors. Also, as currently written, many straightforward accountability tactics—such as geotracking, identification checks, and financial reporting requirements—are nowhere to be found in the bill.

It's important to note that Ohio already struggles with problem gambling rates that have surged since sports betting went live. The Ohio Casino Control Commission reported more than 3,000 calls to the problem gambling helpline in the first months of legalized sports betting alone – and that was with strong age verification and state oversight. HB476 creates a system that would be far harder to monitor or regulate effectively.

True charitable organizations have long relied on face-to-face, community-driven fundraising efforts. Those methods build trust, connection, local accountability, and reinforce what a community is. Turning charity into an online gaming enterprise undermines that spirit and normalizes gambling for more Ohioans, especially our young people. Charitable fundraising should build community – not prey on it. The church fish fry, the fire-department raffle, the high-school fundraiser all exist to bring people together around a shared and specific cause. Moving that online erases accountability, opens the door to abuse, and undermines public trust.

For those reasons and many others, I urge the committee to reject HB 476. Let's protect both the integrity of our charitable sector and the wellbeing of Ohio families and Ohio communities by rejecting this bill and any expansion of gambling in our state –especially any expansion online.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions I can.