

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 476, which would authorize charitable nonprofit organizations to sell raffle tickets online. My name is Robert Herrington and I am the Fire Chief of the Wintersville Volunteer Fire Department.

House Bill 476 is a focused piece of legislation aimed at supporting nonprofit organizations by explicitly legalizing the sale of online raffle tickets, a method that has been commonly used in Ohio for many years. Recently, the Ohio Attorney General issued cease and desist letters to several organizations including ours, stating that online raffle ticket sales violate the current Ohio Revised Code. HB 476 seeks to address this issue by codifying online raffle sales, ensuring that nonprofit organizations can continue to raise funds in this manner. HB 476 would restore clarity and security to nonprofit fundraising efforts, allowing these organizations to focus on serving their communities without legal uncertainty.

I am writing today to offer my continued support of the updated version of House Bill 476 and the proposed amendments. I would like to thank the bill sponsors, representatives Merideth Craig and David Thomas, as well as Chairman Stewart and Vice Chairman Dovilla for their work on bringing this bill through the legislative process so quickly. We also recognize the Ohio Attorney General's Office for their work to not just provide sensible guardrails for the raffle process but also for taking the time to understand our concerns as they helped to shape the legislation. We believe that the legislation as it is presented today provides a fair platform for the creation of both online and traditional raffles by nonprofit organizations in Ohio.

Our raffles have been offline now for over three months and as a result we have lost a significant amount of funding for our fire department. We sincerely hope that House Bill 476 will be voted out of the House of Representatives as soon as possible and that we will see the bill move quickly through the Senate and on for signature by Governor DeWine. Again, thank you all for your efforts and your support of this important piece of legislation.

Respectfully,
Robert Herrington, Fire Chief
Wintersville Volunteer Fire Department