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Chief Jason Rock



Chairperson 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.

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, 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.

My name is Brandon Johnston and I represent The North Lawrence Fire Department in Stark County. We are a nonprofit fire department that relies heavily on fundraising events to support our vital services.

I am writing today to offer my continued support of the updated version of House Bill 476 and the proposed amendments. All of us here at the North Lawrence Fire Department would like to thank the bill sponsors, Representative Merideth Craig and David Thomas, as well as Chairman Stewart and Vice Chairman Dovilla for their hard work on bringing this bill through the legislative process quickly.

We would also like to recognize and thank the Attorney General's Office for their work to help provide safeguards and transparency for our raffles, we also would like to thank them for understanding our concerns and helping us with our future endeavors. We here at the NLFD believe that the legislation as it is presented today provides a fair platform for the creation of both online and traditional raffles by non-profits in Ohio.

Like our colleagues at Wintersville Fire & Rescue our raffles have been offline for a few months and has resulted in great financial losses for our organization. This funding has impacted our ability to purchase additional life saving equipment to help protect our community members. We truly hope that House Bill 476 will be voted out of the House of Representatives as soon as possible and that the bill will move quickly through the Senate and signed by Governor DeWine.

Thank you, Chairperson and Members of the Committee, for all your great work and support on this legislation that is important to all of us here and for non-profits across Ohio.

Brandon A. Johnston
President, North Lawrence Fire Department