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## **Assistant Majority Floor Leader Adam C. Bird**

### **Ohio House District 63**

#### **Sponsor Testimony on House Bill 19**

#### **Before the House Judiciary Committee**

#### **February 12, 2025**

Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn and members of the House Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 19.

I have heard recently from a constituent in regards to the impact that a high school drinking party had upon her daughter. Co-ed teenage drinking parties have always been prevalent but recently they seem to be growing in number, intensity, and can often lead to sexual assault. Sexual assault in these circumstances occur because of the mixture of alcohol, genders, and lack of supervision by adults. Most times, the parents of the children hosting these parties collect car keys, go to bed, and totally ignore the mixture of alcohol and sexual assault occurring in their household. It can also lead to DUI by minors, BUI by minors, or serious accidents.

Parents think that they are doing what it takes to keep kids safe, and that there is not much harm in letting them drink as long as they don't drive. One constituent in my district shared with me that they know of 9 girls in one school year that woke up from a drinking party with a boy on top of them. These girls are often afraid of reporting what has happened. Most girls don't report these crimes because they are embarrassed, because it's somebody they know, and because they don't want to share the worst night of their life with strangers.

Ohio law contributes to this irresponsible attitude held by parents because the standard for providing alcohol to someone else's child is "knowingly". ORC 4301.69 states that parents cannot "knowingly" provide alcohol to minors. We believe that this standard should be changed to "recklessly". By changing this one word, these parents will no longer be able to stock a fridge full of alcohol for the party and then hide behind the plausible deniability of "not knowing" the kids got into it. This will better allow prosecutors to go after parents who host these co-ed teenage drinking parties and then turn a blind eye to what goes on when they've left the room.

This is a very simple bill that deletes the word "knowingly" and replaces it with the word "recklessly".

My county prosecutors support this bill.

The Ohio Association for Justice supports this bill.

This bill has a very intelligent and thoughtful list of bipartisan cosponsors.

My Joint sponsor Rep Josh Williams and I will be working to provide sponsor testimony that I hope will be persuasive. We look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman Thomas and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important resolution. I am happy to answer your questions.