

Chair Thomas, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 249.

I am writing to urge your support for House Bill 249, introduced by Representatives King and Williams, which seeks to address regulatory inconsistencies in Ohio's adult entertainment industry. This legislation is critical to ensuring fair application of the law and protecting the well-being of Ohio's children.

The adult entertainment industry, by design, prioritizes financial gain through performances that are often sexually explicit. Performers such as strippers, exotic dancers, or showgirls are subject to strict state regulations as part of adult-oriented businesses. These regulations ensure that such performances are conducted in age-restricted environments, safeguarding minors from exposure to inappropriate content. However, certain performers, such as female impersonators, who engage in similar sexually charged routines for commercial gain, are not consistently held to the same standards. This discrepancy represents an unequal application of Ohio law and undermines the state's regulatory framework.

Exempting certain performers from compliance based on their identity or performance style is neither equitable nor justifiable. House Bill 249 addresses this gap by ensuring that all performances of a sexually explicit nature, regardless of the performer's identity, are subject to the same oversight. This is not a partisan issue—it is a matter of fairness, consistency, and public safety.

Ohio law currently prohibits minors from entering adult entertainment establishments, yet the lack of clear categorization for certain modern performances allows promoters to market sexually explicit content to audiences that may include children. This loophole poses a direct risk to the well-being of Ohio's youth. The state has a compelling interest in protecting children from exposure to adult-oriented content, and HB 249 provides a necessary framework to close this gap.

I respectfully request your support for House Bill 249 to ensure that all adult entertainment performances are regulated consistently and that Ohio's children are protected from inappropriate exposure.

Chair Thomas, thank you again for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony. I urge the committees support of this legislation.

Devin Palmer