



Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you accepting my written testimony regarding a proposal I believe has been submitted for consideration regarding Ohio's lodging tax.

My name is David Gilbert, and I have the honor of serving as President and CEO of Destination Cleveland, the destination marketing and management organization for Cuyahoga County. Our work centers around promoting and supporting the tourism economy that drives not only our local communities but also contributes meaningfully to Ohio's statewide tourism success.

As I understand it, there has been a proposal submitted to this body to codify a shift in how lodging taxes should be allocated. As you know, current law enables these taxes to be re-invested by destination management organizations like Destination Cleveland to foster an environment that continues to attract as many visitors into this state as possible.

Amendment SC 0197 presents a serious risk to our ability to carry out that work. By allowing lodging tax revenues to be redirected without transparency or engagement with those who generate and depend on them, this amendment threatens the health of the travel and tourism industry.

I believe this particular amendment is currently crafted in such a way that it will not directly impact Destination Cleveland or the other larger CVBs in Ohio. While we are grateful that this proposal does not directly impact Destination Cleveland, we are nonetheless troubled by the potential erosion of a viable model upon which so many of us have come to rely.

In just the last few years, our city has served as host to major sporting events, large-scale and influential conferences and welcomed millions of leisure visitors who have seen for themselves that Cleveland is a world-class destination. Any threat that may erode the integrity of our funding model is an unnecessary obstacle that may impede our ability to showcase our community to the world.

I urge this Committee to reconsider amendment SC 0197 and the impact it will have on our tourism economy. I believe the conversation about the future of tourism investment is both timely and essential – but it must start with transparency and conversations at the local level.

Thank you Chair Cirino and the members of this committee for their time. I would be more than happy to answer any questions.

David Gilbert
President & CEO
Destination Cleveland