

**Testimony of Joe Poelking, Owner
Poelking Lanes Bowling Centers
Poelking Lanes, Poelking Woodman Lanes, Poelking Lanes South
Dayton & Kettering Ohio
Senate Select Committee on Gaming
Wednesday, May 28, 2025**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Romanchuk, Ranking Member Demora, and members of the Senate Select Committee on Gaming, my name is Joe Poelking and I am a third-generation family business owner of three Bowling Centers in the Greater Dayton area, I'm a past president of the Bowling Centers Association of Ohio and I'm a current member of the NFIB Ohio Leadership Council. Thank you for letting me testify today on the potential of regulating retail gaming in Ohio. As previously stated, I own three bowling centers in Greater Dayton that have been in business since 1951. We also employ 84 Ohioans in my three centers.

As in past testimonies, I am here today to once again voice my desperate need to be included in any Ohio gaming expansion. Bowling Centers need a small piece of the gambling pie in order to keep our brick-and-mortar Ohio businesses competitive.

The combination of illegal mini-casinos all over Ohio, and the Fraternal Clubs operating 10 regulated gambling devices, is crippling our businesses.

Since you allowed fraternal clubs to have 10 electronic bingo machines in 2021, it's had a detrimental effect on my business because we have no similar entertainment product to offer.

So, this is what's been happening in my bowling centers and all bowling centers across the state: After league bowlers have finished their matches, many of them, instead of sticking around and having an extra beverage or some food, they head over to the fraternal club just a few minutes away to gamble on their 10 eBingo machines. There are also illegal slot machine parlors all over our state that, even though the casino control commission is doing their best to shut down, they still take customers out of our bowling centers.

It's not a level playing field so all we are asking is that you authorize retail VLTs in our locations in order for us to compete at some level because our patrons want to have this entertainment option. We aren't trying to be casinos, we just ask for a few games, that offer the ability for small bets with small payouts. Please also see the attached letter from NFIB, which was submitted to this committee during last week's hearing.

In conclusion, we respectfully request that if you authorize iGambling on millions of cell phones, that you also allow a VLT option for small Ohio businesses that employ thousands and that have been the backbone of Ohio's economy and communities for decades. Thank you and I'd be happy to try and answer questions.



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May 20, 2025

Senator Nathan Manning
Chair, Senate Select Committee on Gaming
1 Capitol Square, Room 039
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Manning:

We are writing on behalf of the nearly 21,000 governing members of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), and particularly those in the entertainment and hospitality industries, to submit comments on the idea of expanding gaming opportunities in Ohio.

By way of background, our typical member employs 20 or fewer and does less than \$2 million in gross receipts. Our members come from all industries and each of Ohio's 88 counties. Our mission is to allow our members to grow, own, and operate their businesses.

As the Ohio General Assembly contemplates expanding gaming options in the state, we strongly encourage that the final legislative product considers a wide range of businesses as potential providers of new gaming. This includes our brick-and-mortar establishments. We believe any limits to internet-only platforms will be a detriment to existing businesses, including but not limited to bowling alleys, bars, and restaurants, that have embraced the expanded gaming options, like sports betting, in Ohio.

We do not have a position on what types of licenses or permits a business must have to be eligible for expanded gaming options. However, we believe that each business that wishes to offer these additional gaming options to their customers must be given the opportunity to meet the requirements under any new law enacted. And that use of license or permit type is not used to significantly narrow the pool of eligible businesses.

We believe it is imperative that our small businesses that have been serving their respective communities for decades, many of whom are multi-generational, be given the chance to provide their customers with additional entertainment opportunities.

Thank you for considering our perspective and supporting the small businesses in your community.

Sincerely,



Christopher J. Ferruso
State Director



Cameron J. Garczyk
Assistant State Director