**SENATOR STEVE WILSON**

**Senate Workforce Development Committee**
**March 3, 2026**

**Senate Bill 331 – Allow certain public hospitality employees to accept gratuities**

Thank you, Chairman Koehler, Vice-Chair Reynolds, and Ranking Member Ingram, for allowing Senator Blackshear and I the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 331.

I was approached for this bill due to some concerns brought by municipalities in Southwestern Ohio regarding the Ohio Ethics Law. Under the supplemental compensation provision of the Ethics Law – and according to guidance from the Ohio Ethics Commission – a public servant is prohibited from accepting anything of value, from any source other than their public employer, as compensation for the performance of their public duties.

On its face, the supplemental compensation provision makes complete sense. As a matter of public policy, we don't want Members of the Legislature to accept compensation from an outside source to perform a specific legislative action. We don't want members of juries to accept compensation from an outside source and all-of-a-sudden become deadlocked on felony charges. So, what problem does this bill attempt solve?

Across Ohio, we are fortunate to have many state-of-the-art hospitality, recreation, and community facilities that are owned by municipalities, and in some cases, owned by the State. The employees who work at these facilities are public servants just like the Members of the Legislature. But, unlike their private-sector counterparts, if a server at the Maumee Bay Lodge accepted a tip, or if the employee driving the beverage cart at Heatherwoode Golf Club in Springboro accepted a tip, it could be interpreted under the Ethics Law as accepting a prohibited form of compensation for performing their public duty.

This bill is narrowly tailored and would allow public hospitality employees to accept tips. This is a pro-workforce bill. As a matter of public policy, Senator Blackshear and I believe hospitality employees, whether they work in the public sector or private sector, should be on equal footing when it comes to acceptable compensation.