STATEMENT OF JOSH LOUNSBURY
IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 331

Before the Senate Workforce Development Committee
Senator Kyle Koehler, Chair

Chair Koehler, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee:

My name is Josh Lounsbury. I have practiced law for over 20 years at Coolidge Wall. I currently serve as Law Director for two cities in the Dayton area. I submit this statement in support of political subdivisions across Ohio that operate hospitality-based public amenities.

Guidance from the Ohio Ethics Commission indicates that public employees in hospitality roles, such as restaurant servers, may not accept compensation from any source other than their public employer, including customary tips. This conflicts with established industry practices and customer expectations, particularly in venues such as public golf courses.

Municipalities across Ohio operate amenities including concession stands at public pools, event venues and golf courses, which rely on seasonal and part-time employees in traditionally tipped positions. Under current ethics guidance, these employees cannot accept tips, placing public employers at a competitive disadvantage in recruiting and retaining staff.

This issue is especially pronounced at public golf courses, where roles mirror those in the private sector, where tipping is standard. In a competitive labor market, the inability to accept tips makes these positions less attractive and more difficult to fill.

Senate Bill 331 offers a narrow, practical solution by permitting tips for public hospitality employees while maintaining appropriate ethical safeguards. The bill aligns public-sector practices with industry norms without increasing taxpayer costs or altering base wages.

Importantly, the legislation limits tipping to roles where it is customary and excludes positions involving authority or discretion. It also ensures tips cannot be used to offset wages.

This change will help municipalities sustain high-quality public amenities, maintain service standards, and support a reliable seasonal workforce.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 331.