

*Ye
Olde*

Cock n' Bull Tavern

February 27, 2015

The Honorable Louis Blessing III
The Honorable Denise Driehaus
The Honorable Tim W. Brown
77 S. High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Representatives:

I am writing in support of H.B.47, to permit open containers of alcohol in certain designated areas, under certain conditions.

As the owner of a restaurant/pub in Toledo's historic Warehouse District, I have seen firsthand the positive impact on economic development of creative legislative incentives. This has been particularly true in urban areas such as our Warehouse District, where revitalization often requires enormous capital investment to acquire, stabilize, renovate and repurpose hulking old buildings suffering decades of neglect. Whether it be Historic Tax Credits, Community Reinvestment Areas, Tax Increment Financing, or simply modifying local zoning to accommodate new uses, legislative leadership at all levels of government has been key to whatever level of revitalization has occurred.

While the myriad incentives have had an immeasurable impact on the physical revitalization of many urban districts, and have proven extremely helpful to businesses of all types that have opened in, or relocated to, our urban areas, one 21st century reality has not been addressed, other than as a footnote in a broader discussion; incentives specific to the lifestyle of urbanites.

I once heard an "Urbanite" described as, "One who loves the pulse of the city, and who helps to create it." As the father of two children in their twenties, both of whom are at a crossroad in life as to where they want life, work and raise a family, I can tell you that they are part of an ever-growing demographic of young urbanites who seek, "the pulse of the city."

While every job retained or created is certainly important to revitalization, I believe that the true, long term economic success of Ohio rests in the retention of its young people as residents, and the luring of those from outside Ohio to become residents. While creating jobs is paramount, creating jobs in areas with a great quality of life is even more important.

A young professional with a choice between job offers in Toledo and Boston, or Chicago, or Denver, etc., will all too frequently not choose Toledo (or Cleveland, Cincinnati, Dayton, Columbus, Youngtown) because they believe the lifestyle they seek is offered elsewhere.

9 North Huron Street • Toledo, Ohio 43604 • 419 244-2855 • cocknbulldledo@gmail.com

Likewise, employers vying for this workforce are likely to locate where they can offer prospective employees both the job and lifestyle they seek. This creates competitive disadvantage that Ohio needs to reduce or eliminate.

H.B.47 is one step in reducing our disadvantage. Our Warehouse District and the adjoining entertainment district are home to dozens of eating and drinking establishments. The area has become an extremely popular destination for young professionals looking to enjoy the nightlife of an urban area. Residents and visitors alike have flocked to our downtown, and brought life to our streets that has not been seen in decades. Projects to renovate old warehouses and office buildings to residential options cannot keep pace with demand. We have momentum, and H.B.47 is a relatively small step that will certainly build on that momentum.

Many of our guests prefer to bar-hop when visiting downtown. It is the only area in northwest Ohio where people can park once, or take a single cab ride, and be able to visit a dozen or so establishments on foot. And they love it. It creates an atmosphere that cannot be had anywhere else, and it means our sidewalks are alive at night, full of pedestrian traffic, as opposed to simply full parking lots in front of strip-mall bars. The energy created is infectious, and young people want to be part of it.

However, our success has not been without its issues, and H.B.47 would also help to alleviate some of them. Two issues that have been particularly problematic are unique to our type of area; over-drinking and excessive litter. Both seem to be, at least to the degree that we deal with them, unintended consequences of our success.

Our guests frequently visit in groups, either sharing a single cab or taking turns as designated driver on a given night. It is all too common to witness part of a group announcing that the group is moving on to another establishment, when at least one of the group has just gotten a fresh drink. Rather than waste a drink or risk losing their group, the drink gets guzzled down, and off they go. When the scene can repeat itself several times over the course of the night, especially with relatively inexperienced drinkers, the result is at best not healthy, and at worst dangerous.

The other option in the above scenario is to find a way to sneak the drink out of the bar. We position staff at the doors to address the situation, but as with most things, people find very creative ways to hide the drink and get outside with it. The evidence is excessive litter in the form of broken bottles and glasses on our sidewalks each morning; not only unsightly in an area trying to revitalize itself, but potentially dangerous.

H.B.47 could alleviate both these issues by eliminating the need to guzzle a drink in order to keep up with ones bar-hopping friends, and by allowing for the legal transfer of their drink to a plastic cup they can take with them, which they can drink and dispose of legally. I believe H.B.47 could have a significant impact on lessening the amount of over drinking and public drunkenness that currently exists.

Finally, creation of open-container districts will have a far-reaching impact on defining Ohio as a state with the vibrant urban vibe and lifestyle attractive to our young professionals and the companies whose success depends on them.

Again, I wholeheartedly support H.B.47 and urge the Ohio legislature and governor to support it as well. Please do not hesitate to contact me, via email at jamesmettler@gmail.com, or by phone at 419.389.3644 if you should have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Jim Mettler
Owner
Cock n Bull of Toledo, LLC

Sent via email