

## MEMO

TO: House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee

FROM: Mayor Robert “Bo” Bemmes

REGARDING: House Bill 47

DATE: March 17, 2015

I am writing on behalf of the City of Reading regarding the recent passage of Ohio Revised Code 4301.80 which allows “community entertainment districts” for Ohio communities of 30,000 population or more to have access to more liquor licenses and more flexible open container laws for certain special events.

The City of Reading and many other mid-size communities across Ohio with less than 30,000 population have great potential to expand their unique retail and entertainment markets. Yet, as currently adopted, the community entertainment district legislation prohibits us from using this valuable economic development tool to facilitate local economic growth and vitality.

Take for example the Reading Bridal District in the City of Reading. With over 10,000 visitors a year, the Reading Bridal District is the largest of its kind in the United States. The District hosts 38 wedding merchants serving a full range of bridal needs including gowns, accessories, formalwear, wedding cakes, catering, invitations, photography and DJ services, and wedding flowers and decorations. The Reading Bridal District also has an exciting mix of restaurants, bars and other retail stores for shoppers to patronize. It is a one-stop destination location for Greater Cincinnati Area brides, as well as for brides from across the region, nation, and world.

The Reading Bridal District sponsors several major special events each year including the “Fall in Love” event and the “Cake Dive”. These events generate widespread regional exposure, attract large numbers of visitors to the District and are held against the backdrop of a quaint historic setting complete with “gas lamps”, brick sidewalks, and tree lined streets. ***Adult beverages are an important part of the unique experience visitors enjoy during a visit to these special events.***

The Reading Bridal District and other retail districts in other mid-size communities across Ohio are valuable assets to their respective regions. Expanding the community entertainment district legislation to include cities with population of less than 30,000 will help these communities continue to prosper and strengthen Ohio’s diverse tourism industry. ***For this reason, we respectfully request that you initiate legislation to expand Ohio’s community entertainment district legislation to include communities under 30,000 in population.***