



Ohio Campground Owners Association, Inc.

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Privately owned and operated campgrounds serving Ohio's recreational needs

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chairwoman Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and Members of the House Education and Career Readiness committee for this opportunity to submit written proponent testimony on House Bill 549.

My name is Chip Hanawalt. I am the President of the Ohio Campground Owners Association, which is comprised of 145 privately owned and operated campgrounds in Ohio. My wife and I are the owners of Sunbury/Columbus KOA in Sunbury, Ohio.

The Ohio Campground Owners Association is thankful to have this opportunity to bring forward our perspective regarding the school start date in Ohio. Having a platform to provide our thoughts and ideas is instrumental to the growth and success of our small family businesses throughout Ohio. Our association has testified in support of various pieces of legislation in the past that would prohibit schools from opening for instruction prior to Labor Day.

House Bill 549 would benefit Ohio's campgrounds and other tourism-related businesses by allowing families to enjoy more time outdoors together during the warm months of the late spring and summer without interfering with a school schedule and related extracurricular activities. With potentially longer summer breaks, parents will have more time to take their children traveling and camping in Ohio. Additional travel and recreational time during the summer months will result in tourism money for the State and small businesses. Campground owners do approximately 90% of our business between the months of June and August.

An extended season and more campers visiting our campgrounds will result in the need for more employees. When we lose campers at the start of the school year, we must also cut back on the number of employees needed. By expanding the potential summer vacation season, we would be able to extend our summer employment opportunities.

Formal education is very important but not all education is accomplished in the classroom setting. Outdoor adventures, family vacations and travel are an important part of the childhood learning and socialization process and allow children to learn by experiencing nature and science firsthand. Children also benefit from hands-on learning activities and spending quality time outdoors with their families.

In 2005, our neighboring state, Michigan, enacted legislation that requires public schools to start after Labor Day. According to The Michigan Chamber of Commerce website, their members in the travel and tourism industries have reported significant uptick in business after the change was made.

In conclusion, tourism is big business in Ohio and generates billions in state and local taxes. Our industry provides entertainment, adventure, and employment to many Ohioans. Increasing the time and opportunity for summer travel and recreation will not only benefit Ohio's tourism industry but Ohio families as well.

The Ohio Campground Owners Association would like to thank Representative Arndt for his dedication to this legislation.

Chairman Brenner, I thank you for the opportunity to submit remarks in favor of this legislation.