

My name is Brya Long, and I represent Long's Retreat Family Resort, in Western Pike County. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 229. This proposed bill is very near and dear to my heart, and to that of my family. In addition, it is extremely important to privately-owned campground owners, like us at Long's Retreat. We are a family owned and operated business that was started in 1971 by Eric Long, my father, a local young man with a few acres of land and a big imagination. What began as a small campground has grown into something nobody ever expected. Each year has brought new additions and improvements, and it continues to keep expanding today. As the top tourist attraction in Pike County, we are located in an extremely rural area of the state, and almost all our visitors are surprised to find us! Hard work and personalized customer service set us apart from other places; we take a lot of pride in our name and our business. We are also proud members of the Ohio Campground Owners Association, who also gives support for this bill.

It is getting harder and harder to successfully operate a campground. As my dad often says, "What was ok back then is not ok now." We face obstacles every single day from the EPA, state and local health departments, the Department of Agriculture, various inspections, permits, and more. These rules and regulations are put in place to protect our customers and guests, so they can expect a safe place to visit. We understand, abide by, and comply with all these regulations. Yet who protects us business owners from frivolous lawsuits in today's "sue-hungry" society? We are also challenged with potential insurance claims from the risks inherent to camping, the ones we are discussing today, and I feel that at some point, the public must take responsibility for their own actions.

I can name a few examples of injuries that occurred from risks involved with being in the outdoors in recent years. We have had a small child fall into a campfire and burn his foot, a young kid wrecks his bike into a tree and sustain injuries, as well as an intoxicated adult sustain injuries from jumping off a picnic table. These are just three of the numerous examples where we have paid medical bills and/or insurance premiums, even though these accidents were just that—accidents—and we had no cause for negligence or fault.

We have also faced cases where a guest has been injured on our Attractions. Since those are licensed by the state, specifically the Ohio Department of Agriculture Amusement Ride Safety and Fairs, we understand that those examples would NOT fall under the protection of this bill. When one of our guests hurt his ankle on one of our waterslides, we understood that although it was a total accident, we were ultimately responsible.

I know I speak for most, if not all, campgrounds when I say we would be happy to post any necessary signage as part of HB 229, in order to demonstrate and display that it is understood by all those visiting our park that any activity inherent to camping is to be done at your own risk. Although I strongly feel it should be common sense, I know first-hand that common sense can be lacking in today's world. When I visit the outdoors, whether it be a park, beach, or campground—I know that I am taking on activities pertaining to nature at my own risk.

We cannot possibly prevent every possible accident, whether it be on developed or undeveloped land. We try our best but it should be law that our campers are expected to accept risk and responsibility for their own actions.

I would also like to point out that as privately owned campgrounds, we face a lot of liability issues that the State Parks do not and risks inherent to camping is one of them.

I appreciate you taking the time to read this, and I would be happy to provide any further information.