

Good morning. My name is Aaron Crater. Thank you for the opportunity to testify as a proponent of SB22 today. I am a professional bartender of nearly 15 years, and the founder of Ohio Barhop, advocating on behalf of Ohio's service industry professionals that work in the bar and restaurant industry. I founded Ohio Barhop in early August after Governor DeWine instituted the 10pm alcohol sales curfew through the Ohio Liquor Control Commission on July 31. I saw how devastating this would be for my industry.

My industry has been hit harder than many in the last year. We were one of the first to get shut down. On March 15, Governor DeWine shut down bars and restaurants putting many of Ohio's nearly 600,000 service industry workers out of work. I was out of work for 5 months, and many of my colleagues across the state faced similar situations. When we were finally allowed to re-open, very strict capacity guidelines were placed on us which further limited our ability to work and earn a living.

On July 31, the Governor put bars and restaurants under a 10PM alcohol sales curfew that was to last 120 days until November 28, removing the most profitable hours for businesses and workers. As the curfew neared it's end, the Governor instituted a new blanket curfew for all businesses, mandating that they close to the public at 10PM. He carved out exceptions to this curfew for essential businesses such as grocery stores and pharmacies. It was very clear that the intent was to skirt legislative oversight by the JCARR committee, and keep bars and restaurants closed. As a result of this we have seen many of our bars and restaurants simply go out of business permanently, while he continued to grant variances to this curfew to big businesses such as sports stadiums.

Just 2 days before the Governor enacted his 10PM blanket curfew, he put his medical advisory team on a press conference to discuss the spread of COVID throughout our state. They all stated that they were not seeing spread of COVID at bars and restaurants, but rather at private gatherings. Against the best advice of his own team of experts, he still forced us under his oppressive curfew. Through this entire process, the bar and restaurant industry has complied with what has been asked of us, even though it cost many their life savings, jobs, futures, and even homes.

From the very beginning, our Governor has told us that bars and restaurants are dangerous environments, but has never backed that up with any proof. The reason is that proof does not exist. Ohioans are not getting sick in our bars and restaurants. There is virtually no contract tracing data that shows infections are happening in our establishments, yet the Governor continues to demonize and attack us.

We can no longer afford to live under the rule of a single man. This method of governance is not the way our state is intended to be run, and the results have been disastrous. It is time to restore order to our state, by placing checks and balances back in place, and have our legislature involved in the decision making process as a co-equal branch once again. I strongly urge you to vote in favor of SB22, to bring back order and prosperity to our great state. Thank you.