



Testimony to the Ohio Senate Select Committee on Gaming
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Chair Schuring, Vice-Chair Manning and members of the Senate Select Committee on Gaming, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 176, how our businesses operate in the gaming space today and how we envision the sports gaming industry aligning with our businesses.

By way of background, as President of the Ohio Grocers Association I proudly represent over 500 food retail, wholesale and supply companies across the Buckeye state. My members range from the largest chain stores to the smallest “mom and pop” independent grocers as well as some convenience stores, and of course, the food wholesalers who supply these stores. Grocery stores and other retail food establishments are highly regulated. Customers expect a safe and secure environment every time they enter one of our member’s stores. This fact has only been amplified over the past twelve months with our response to the coronavirus pandemic. Whether a customer is picking up a prescription, a bottle of wine, a lottery ticket, or shopping for groceries, there is a certain level of expectation in terms of service and safety that they anticipate, and our stores work to provide. It is that high service standard that I believe sets us apart.

We are advocating today for a level playing field in the sports gaming market. One that gives Ohio businesses the ability to participate and leads to more accessible options for all Ohioans. OGA appreciates the committee incorporating a sports gaming concept through the Ohio lottery in SB176. However, we have concerns with the lottery pool language in SB 176 and its ability to incentivize consumers and provide a quality product of the caliber our customers expect in the marketplace.

Many of our members are proud to partner with the state and offer lottery at their locations. In fact, as of 2020, over six hundred grocery store locations engaged as lottery retail agents and handled over \$313 million wagers over the course of that year. Incorporating current lottery practices for sports gaming provides the necessary guidelines and safeguards to mitigate potential risk. As outlined above, grocery stores have continued to demonstrate our ability to

handle the transparency, security, and risk components. We adhere to a strict regulatory framework and implement protocols to combat fraud and bad actors. Staff go through rigorous training on all types of transactions (ex. SNAP, WIC, tobacco liquor, money orders, etc.). These are by and large Ohio based businesses, employing Ohioans. If the state legalizes sports gaming, Ohio grocery stores, as committed and proven partners of the state lottery, would appreciate the ability to provide this new offering to Ohioans living in all areas of the state.

We recognize there are a lot of different concepts and proposals on how sports gaming will function and be structured in Ohio. To that end, we thank you for including a lottery product in the sports betting offerings in the state, but we request that the legislature does not hamstring the design of this product. Allow the Lottery and its retail partners to implement new games under the strict protocols to which they already adhere. The grocery store model works because it's a uniquely crafted and regulated one. Customers come into our stores for several different reasons, but they expect a consistently safe and secure experience.

Appreciating mobile gaming will no doubt consume the lion's share of the market, we are asking for an inclusive approach that will allow other businesses in Ohio, including grocery stores, to provide a sports betting product as part of an expanded lottery offering.

Thank you again for your time and the opportunity to provide our comments on this issue. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

