



October 7, 2017

Dear Members of the House Economic Development, Commerce, and Labor Committee,

I am respectfully submitting this letter in strong support of House Bill 263 to allow dogs in outdoor dining areas of restaurants. As the President/CEO and part owner of Gervasi Vineyard (Winery, Hotel, Restaurants, and Event Center), our business has been directly impacted negatively by the current laws of Ohio that prohibit dogs on patios.

As has been common practice by many restaurants, breweries, and wineries in Ohio, we allowed dogs on our outdoor dining patio with in 2016 and initially in 2017 until a complaint was filed against us mid-summer at which time we were ordered to stop by our City Health Department. We unknowingly were in violation of the Ohio laws but learned the City of Canton only regulates this when they receive a complaint...in other words they make no effort to regulate this unless they receive a complaint. I should mention that the complaint against us was NOT in response to any incident or issue, just a complaint that the practice was allowed.

During the two summers that we allowed dogs on our patio, we had tremendous support and participation from the public and never experienced a negative incident with a dog or its owner. We implemented Guidelines (see below) that we carefully monitored and our guests complied with.

We initiated dogs on the patio initially in direct response to customer demand for this opportunity as guests reported to us they would like this experience and see it popular with other Ohio restaurants and in other states when traveling. We experienced an increase in business on the days we permitted pets and it is worth nothing that there were ALWAYS options for our guests to dine inside and alternate areas outside where dogs were not permitted.

It is also worth noting that when we publically announced the cancellation of dogs on the patio, the public response in frustration and disappointment was overwhelming. We received over 1600

responses on FaceBook and countless emails and comments in support of dogs being allowed (approximately 90% in support). It's fair to say the vast majority of the public support this practice which is common around the country.

I sincerely hope you will vote in favor of this legislation that helps Ohio businesses grow while satisfying what the public wants with virtually no negative effects on those who do not support this.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Regards,



Scott Swaldo

President/CEO

Gervasi Vineyard

[www.gervasivineyard.com](http://www.gervasivineyard.com)

#### **GUIDELINES FOR DOGS on the PIAZZA (Patio)**

- Dogs **MUST** be on leash at all times and attended by owner and not on patio furniture.
- Owner **MUST** clean up droppings of dog utilizing bags (some provided) and dispose at the dumping station located near the outdoor restrooms.
- Dogs permitted in designated areas only: On the Piazza and immediate surrounding lawn and along brick path connecting Piazza to the Stark Parks Trail. Dogs are not permitted in the Vineyard, around the Pavilion, Marketplace, Bistro, Villas, Crush House or any other areas not listed.
- Owners are responsible for behavior of dogs. Only socially friendly dogs should be brought to GV. Aggressive or disruptive dogs (including excessive barking) will be asked to leave the property.
- Be aware and sensitive to other guests as to not disrupt them also enjoying the property.
- No female dogs in heat.
- Dogs must be current with vaccinations and owner may be asked for documentation.
- No outside food, treats, or toys. Limited dog treats will be made available with owner permission. Water bowls will be available.
- No dog grooming, training, or other organized play while visiting.