



October 10, 2017

Chairman Young, Vice Chairwoman DeVitits, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and members of the House Economic Development, Commerce, and Labor Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 263, which will benefit my members to allow dogs on their outdoor patios if they choose to.

First a little background, my name is Joe Rosato and I am the Director of Government Affairs for the Ohio Restaurant Association. The Ohio Restaurant Association was founded in 1920 and is the leading trade association for the food service industry in Ohio. The association works to represent, educate and promote the rapidly growing food service industry in Ohio. The food service industry in Ohio employs over 574,000 people which is approximately 10% of the state's workforce, which is the third largest employer. In addition, the industry is projected to do \$20.9 billion in sales.

The purpose of this letter is to support HB 263. For years bars and restaurants have been allowing dogs on patios with little to no problems. Until this year, when the Franklin County Public Health Department began enforcing the current law which prohibits such practice.

Many people feel that dogs are family members and would like to take them with them wherever they go. We would like for restaurants to have the choice if they want to allow that.

Allowing dogs on patios allows for more interaction in neighborhoods. If someone is out walking their dog they will have the choice to stop in and socialize on a patio. The restaurant business is changing and people are demanding delivery. Brick & mortar restaurants need to do all they can to retain and attract customers and if it's not the right choice for that business they can simply choose not to participate.

The ORA believes this is clearly an issue about giving restaurant owners the freedom of choice. We're not saying everyone should do this; we just want people to decide for themselves.

Again to be clear we are only talking about dogs on patios and not inside the restaurant. Restaurants will have to adhere to the Department of Health's food safety codes while allowing dogs on patios.

We've heard concerns about allergies to dogs. We would hope that restaurants would have a dog-friendly area much as they used to have designated smoking areas and let people know that dogs might be present.

The legislation is about rolling back unnecessary regulations and putting the choice in the hands of the restaurant owner.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Rosato".

Joe Rosato
Director of Government Affairs