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Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 522
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Before the Senate Agriculture Committee

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Hoagland, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 522. Since the legislature approved outdoor refreshment areas (ORAs) during the last General Assembly under House Bill 47 sponsored by Chairman Blessing and Representative Driehaus, many cities including Canton, Middletown (the first to adopt), Toledo, Hilliard and Worthington have instituted DORAs (designated/downtown outdoor refreshment areas). House Bill 47 exempted from the Open Container Law any person who is carrying an opened container of beer or intoxicating liquor within an outdoor refreshment area, if the container is purchased from a specified liquor permit holder with an ORA designation.

In June, Grove City is home to the Wine and Arts Festival. The festival, now in its seventh year, repeatedly draws 30,000 wine and art enthusiasts from all over Ohio and beyond. The two-day festival operates under a temporary F permit.

What does this festival have to do with DORAs? Under current law, if Grove City institutes a DORA, the festivalgoers would be prohibited from carrying their wine into the DORA. House Bill 522 allows an F class permit that sponsors an event located in the outdoor refreshment to apply to the division for issuance of an outdoor refreshment area designation. The division shall issue such a designation if the division determines that the permit holder is in compliance with all applicable requirements established under Chapters 4301 and 4303 of the Revised Code. When I spoke to the Wholesale Beer and Wine Association about the bill, I was surprised to learn that they had been discussing similar legislation last fall after they were contacted by wholesalers in the Lancaster and Toledo area.

HB 522 will allow festivalgoers, both local and visiting, to enjoy the DORAs that the legislature had the foresight to create. It will allow a couple, split on beverage of choice, to grab a wine from the festival, a beer from Plank's and meet in the DORA to enjoy the beautiful downtown. Chairman Blessing stated that House Bill 47 was about economic development and bringing more business to different areas around the state. I believe that HB 522 will complement this legislation by allowing patrons of businesses who are participating in festivals to utilize the DORA as well.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 522. I'd be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.