



December 5, 2017

Re: Senate Bill 182 Proponent Testimony

Good afternoon. My name is Beth Miller and I am President and CEO of Wagtown, an Ohio-born national nonprofit which advocates for and sets the bar for responsible and authentic dog-friendliness in America. Our research to date spans 353 site visits and interviews in 12 states. We have talked at length with leaders in regional vibrancy, innovation, health & human services, animal control, economic development, travel & tourism, animal rescue, public art, food service, infrastructure improvement, land use planning, and more. Following all of this primary and secondary research, I offer the following testimony.

This bill is about giving business owners the choice, not forcing them to be dog-friendly. For some restaurant owners, it may be a personally-motivated decision, for others it will most certainly be a business sustainability decision.

I agree that dogs at a restaurant changes the "brand experience" of that establishment. The restaurant owner determines what that experience includes - within the confines of the law. In some cases, dog-friendliness may genuinely reflect their statement of who they are as a dining/R&R experience. In other cases, it may not. This action simply gives the restaurant or bar owner the freedom and discretion to make that call and to do so within the boundaries of the law.

At a recent legislative meeting attended by the Ohio Department of Health, Association of Ohio Health Commissioners, interested members of the public, Cleveland Animal Protective League, Wagtown, Director of Public Health Policy for the City of Columbus, ASPCA, a registered sanitarian expert with the state of Ohio, Columbus Chamber of Commerce, Ohio Director of The Humane Society of the United States, Ohio 4 Pups On Patios, and Department of Agriculture, State Representative Laura Lanese directly asked both the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture if they had ANY evidence to suggest that dogs on patios should not move forward. Both responded, "We do not." She also cited a research project from the California Institute of Public and Environmental Health determined that "there is no evidence out there to show that dogs on patios increases any health concerns." In short, there is no research to conclude increased risk as a result of companion dogs on patios of restaurants.

That being said, this is "new territory" for some in Ohio. While there may be more to learn, we have found no evidence to support blocking restaurateurs (or future entrepreneurial ventures) from making the dog-friendly choice should it suit their brand and clientele. It certainly is not cause, in my opinion, to infer elevated risks to the extent of passing undue burden to proprietors through additional hoops, red tape, inspections, and cost. This ought to be seen as an evolution to empower growth in the Buckeye state's restaurant appeal for both residents, newcomers, and tourists.

One thing is certain: the pet industry is predicted to continue its uninterrupted climb to \$74 BILLION this year. Whether your reaction to doggies in day care and poodles in skirts causes heart swell or heartburn, that multibillion-dollar industry forecast is the evolving reality of the dogs and their relationship to humans in America. We have seen that dollars follow dogs and consumers are making buying and brand loyalty decisions based on dog accommodation. Senate Bill 182 allows business owners to have the choice on how to, or if to, hitch their wagon to that economic flow.

With respect,

Beth Miller

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