



Ohio Restaurant Association Testimony in Support of Amendments to HB 160 which would provide greater flexibility to businesses and communities

April 27, 2020

Chair Hoagland, Vice-Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member O'Brien and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

On behalf of Ohio's 23,000 restaurant and foodservice locations and Ohio's 585,000 restaurant and foodservice employees, the Ohio Restaurant Association appreciates the opportunity to be here today in support of Amendments AM_133_2381-1 and AM_133_2382 to HB 160. These timely amendments will give significant and needed flexibility to Ohio's restaurants and the communities we serve. In light of the public health and economic crisis wrought on our state by the COVID-19 pandemic, this legislation is an important and necessary step as Ohio's economy reopens.

Ohio's restaurants are the cornerstones of our communities, and our restaurants and our communities have been devastated by this ongoing crisis. Even as restaurants begin to reopen, the Dine Safe Ohio mandates they are operating under and a dining public that in many instances remains nervous, will lead to a slow recovery. This legislation recognizes these important facts and will give restaurants a better chance to make it through this crisis, emerge strong on the other side, and come back vigorously to help revive Ohio's economic engine and strengthen our communities. 51% of the US food dollar is now spent at restaurants, making restaurants not just an essential part of our economy, but essential to feeding our state, our country and our communities.

This legislation also supports Ohio's communities, giving them tools to support their local businesses and provide further safe opportunities for their citizens to support and enjoy the businesses that make their community vibrant. Outdoor dining is a hallmark of an Ohio summer, showcases our local businesses, and is a visible sign of a vibrant community. Giving communities greater flexibility (while also letting them keep local control) to expand outdoor dining is a great way the Ohio Legislature can support Ohio businesses and Ohio communities.

Tod Bowen, Managing Director of External Affairs and Government Relations
Ohio Restaurant Association