

House Bill 473 (Smith, T.)
Proponent Testimony
Barry Sheets, Citizens for Community Values
Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee
December 16th, 2020

Chairman Schuring, vice chair Rulli, ranking member O'Brien and members of the committee, thank you for allowing this testimony to be submitted in support of House Bill 473, Rep. J. Todd Smith's legislation to ensure the legality of the use of the motto of the state of Ohio, "With God All Things Are Possible" to be used alongside the Great Seal of our state. Citizens for Community Values applauds Rep. Smith for bringing this issue forward, and for helping to continue to inspire Ohio citizens with the message of our state motto.

It is fitting that, after 60 years since the motto was first adopted by the state, and nearly 20 years after this state successfully defended the use of the motto in a legal challenge in the federal courts (which ruled that it is indeed Constitutionally permissible to use our motto as the official state expression of our optimism), that we are here today considering clarifying our statutes to reflect that this motto may be used alongside our Seal in official documents.

Currently, our Great Seal and the seals of our Constitutional offices, our state court system, our local government agencies, and our benevolent institutions may be reproduced on documents, websites, etc., by provisions of the Ohio Constitution and statute, but those statutes are generally silent to the use of our state's motto along with those seals. House Bill 473 would specifically allow the official motto of Ohio to be displayed alongside any official Ohio seal.

We hope that this committee will find it possible to help clarify this ambiguity in our statutes, and specifically authorize the use of our optimistic and hopeful state motto alongside our state seal. We look forward to seeing this bill voted from the committee in strong bi-partisan fashion.