



Ohio Restaurant Association Testimony on Senate Bill 374

December 2, 2020

Chair McColley, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio and Members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce 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 address the current state of Ohio's restaurant, foodservice and hospitality industry. In light of the public health and economic crisis wrought on our state by the COVID-19 pandemic, the subsequent closure of on premises dining at restaurants for more than two months, the added costs and capacity limitations to comply with the Dine Safe Ohio operating guidelines, the myriad state and local curfews, stay at home advisories and other limitations on our industry, and consumer confidence models that are all over the place, Ohio's restaurant, foodservice and hospitality community is reeling.

Ohio's restaurants are the cornerstones of our communities, and our restaurants and our communities have been devastated by this ongoing crisis. Ohio's restaurant community is resilient and creative, but the devastating effects of the initial dine-in closures and all of the obstacles referenced above remain incredibly difficult to overcome. Most restaurant operators are still operating at sales levels down between 20% and 70% versus the prior year and 86% don't expect to breakeven financially in 2020. Any hope and help for the hospitality community, whether in the form of additional support or the lessening of operating restrictions, will give restaurants a better chance to make it through this crisis, emerge on the other side, and come back vigorously to help revive Ohio's economic engine and strengthen our communities.

Ohio's restaurants have always been leaders in food, employee, and guest safety and have successfully added social distancing to our always strong safety record. We have reopened our dining rooms and patios safely to feed our communities, put restaurant workers back to work, and help revive Ohio's economic engine. Despite all of the health and safety efforts they are adhering to, as outlined in our [Ohio Restaurant Promise](#), Ohio restaurants are constantly on pins and needles about the threat of additional restrictions or other roadblocks to fully and safely serving our communities. We know restaurants are operating safely and appreciate legislation that will help restaurants and hospitality businesses weather this storm and confidently take all of the necessary steps to operate safely and reopen more fully. 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.

The current economic and public health crisis puts an even greater premium on maximizing every opportunity for our local businesses to operate fully, profitably, and safely. We appreciate your consideration of this legislation and the Ohio Legislature's support of Ohio's restaurants and the communities we serve.

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