



House Economic and Workforce Development Committee
Proponent Testimony for HB 169
David E. Wojnar, Distilled Spirits Council of the United States
March 16, 2021

On behalf of the Distilled Spirits Council of the United (DISCUS), a national trade association representing some of the world's leading distillers both large and small we respectfully request your support of HB 169 , legislation that would provide much needed financial assistance to the many hospitality industry businesses that have been impacted by COVID-19. During these unprecedented times, you have listened to the plight of Ohio's restaurants and bars as they struggled to cope with the challenges posed by COVID-19. As one of the first to allow cocktails to-go, on a permanent basis you have been a real champion for Ohio's hospitality industry, and we ask that you continue to be loud voice by supporting HB 169.

Thousands of hospitality businesses across Ohio including restaurants, taverns, bars, distilleries, and their retail sales operations and tasting rooms have been closed either completely or in some capacity since mid-March. According to the National Restaurant Association, sales at restaurants were down 78 percent in the first few weeks of the nationwide lockdown, causing restaurants to lay off 86 percent of their employees. Clearly, this has had a devastating impact on the thousands of people employed by on-premises establishments in Ohio.

Ohio's restaurants, bars and distilleries have been absolutely devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and HB 169 will provide critical funding for these businesses as they work to get back on their feet. Specifically, hospitality businesses will be able to use the \$125 million in grants to keep the lights on and provide good-paying jobs. Ohio restaurants, bars and distilleries are in desperate need of relief, and this bill is a great place to start. Thank you in advance for your support and thank you for introducing this much needed legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "D. E. Wojnar" followed by a horizontal line.

David Wojnar
Senior Vice President and Head of State Public Policy
Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S.