



**Proponent Testimony before the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
on behalf of the Ohio Auctioneers Association**

in support of House Bill 321 – Updates to Ohio’s Auctioneer Law

**Karen Huelsman, Innovative Auctions
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Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Karen Huelsman and I am an auctioneer and President of Innovative Auctions, Inc. as well as a Realtor/Auctioneer with Irongate Realtors, Inc. I am also the President of the Ohio Auctioneers Association.

I am here today to provide testimony in support of HB321 regarding changes to ORC 4707, the Auctioneer Law on behalf of Innovative Auctions and the Ohio Auctioneers Association.

I would like to thank Representatives Darrell Kick & Bob Young for their work and support on behalf of this important bill. I would also like to thank the Ohio Department of Agriculture and Ohio Auctioneers Commission for their help and collaboration.

There are two goals in mind with this bill.

(1) Relieve barriers to entry into our profession with the number one barrier being the outdated Apprenticeship Program. HB 321 will accomplish this by removing the Apprenticeship requirement up front and adding some minimal continuing education.

When I was first licensed in 2008, most Ohio Auctioneers did basically the same thing only in varying volumes. Live bid call Auction, food trailer, family working the ring and clerking. Today’s Auction industry is evolving into specialties: Contract Auctioneers, Benefit/Charity Auctioneers, Online-Only Auctions, Large equipment. Certainly COVID has accelerated this process. As our industry continues to change and evolve, we want the regulations that govern us to adapt and change with the times.

These are a few reasons why I think Ohio needs to update the 12-month mandatory apprenticeship program requirement before an auctioneer is eligible for a license:

- (a) Auctioneers do not want to bring on apprentices and 'raise up' their competition. As an example, the Auction firm that I apprenticed under would most likely not do an apprenticeship again with the exception of a family member. While we still have a fond professional relationship, I've gone on to grow the business to the point that we no longer consider them a competitor.
- (b) For an Auctioneer that wishes to go into specialized auction, outdated Apprenticeship program serves them no benefit. As an example, many benefit/charity Auctioneers will never do an old-school live bid call auction. The apprenticeship program currently also requires 12 Live Bids. The apprenticeship would delay their entry into their desired area of practice for over a year with no benefit.
- (c) As an Association, Ohio Auctioneers are moving toward mentorship opportunities for those wishing to enter our industry so they can be mentored by professionals in their desired area of practice to develop their skills.
- (d) Many in the Auction industry still view women entering the profession as clerks, making it even more difficult to find an Auctioneer to apprentice them. Eliminating the apprentice requirement would eliminate this barrier to entry for women.

With the changes proposed in this bill, a person wishing to enter the Auction profession will need the required 80 hours of classroom education from an approved provider then sit for the Auction exam. After they pass the exam they would be a fully licensed Auctioneer. This process would take 2 months vs. the current 14+ month process. The Ohio Auctioneers Association has worked to move this forward in the spirit of SB255 (from the 132 GA) to reduce barriers to occupational licenses.

The second goal of this legislation is to:

- (2) Cover online Auctions under Auction law to bring another layer of protection to consumers by educating these individuals on basic auction practices, ethics, contracts and the use of Trust Accounts. In other words: Online Sellers are NOT Online Auctioneers/Auction professionals.

Other proposed changes have been worked on with the sponsors of the bill and the Ohio Auctioneers Association and the Ohio Department of Agriculture and include:

- (a) Proposed addition of continuing education requirement for Auctioneers, removing the special Auctioneer license
- (b) Adding definitions of Live and Online Auctions

- (c) Removing the oral exam requirement
- (d) Changing the Auction Firm license to a biennial renewal
- (e) Change in the handling of the Auctioneer fund

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony on this important bill. We urge your favorable support to modernize our Auction laws. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.