



**Senate Bill 223
Written Proponent Testimony
Senate Judiciary Committee
May 22, 2024**

Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 223, legislation that protects consumers and businesses by establishing a specific task force to combat organized retail crime.

By way of background, as President of the Ohio Grocers Association I proudly represent over 500 food retail, wholesale, and supply companies across the Buckeye state. My members range from the largest chain stores to the smallest “mom and pop” independent grocers as well as some convenience stores and of course the food wholesalers who supply these stores.

Grocery store owners deal with a variety of complex issues and challenges on a day-to-day basis. Loss prevention and mitigating shrinkage is a continual problem that impacts our store’s bottom lines. Criminals use stolen items from our stores to further enhance their multi-billion-dollar organized retail crime enterprises by pushing our merchandise through online marketplaces or into the black market. The pandemic has only heightened this problem as customer shopping habits have shifted to more online use. We believe Senate Bill 223 is a prudent step in addressing this problem and one that ultimately protects consumers.

This legislation would establish a specific organized retail crime council and an investigative task force, which would modify theft offense and penalties related to retail property and arm the council with the necessary funds to act on these. As part of this council, the independent grocer would have the opportunity to serve and provide input on these measures.

Senate Bill 223 is an important step in combating organized retail crime and has the full support of the Ohio Grocers Association. We urge your favorable consideration.

