



February 12, 2021

Honorable Mike DeWine, Governor
State of Ohio
Riffe Center for the Arts & Government
77 South High Street, 30th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215 February 12, 2021

Dear Governor DeWine,

We are submitting for your consideration proposed safety guidelines for the safe operation of Ohio fairs and festivals for the 2021 season. We and the supporting organizations firmly trust and believe that we can work together to produce a successful fair and festival season. And we believe we have addressed your concerns about operating fairs and festivals safely. We support these safety guidelines and submit them to you for approval.

These safety guidelines are based off of other similar protocols your office has approved and released. They cover all aspects of the events we support moving forward.

We know our communities can operate fun, educational, and safe county fairs and festivals. These are our neighbors; we must trust them to act responsibly. County fairs in particular are steeped in tradition and it is important that we allow that tradition to continue. We must also recognize that our fairs and festivals provide a financial benefit to our communities and the businesses that operate on our midways.

There is no question to the importance of the junior fair. But those junior fair participants benefit most when they are able to have the FULL fair experience. We are seeing the unintended consequences of the junior fair-only order with kids and families being reluctant to purchase their animal projects. They just don't see the full benefits of the time and investment to only show at a junior fair. And they don't even feel confident that will happen this year.

The economic impact of these event is impossible to fully measure. However, the impact of the loss of these events is approximately \$500 million, and this is felt directly in our backyards. These are events where local charities raise their money for the year and invest back in the communities. Police and fire organizations are able to garner support through non-profit donations collected at these events. Local small businesses and entrepreneurs are able to meet new customers at vendor booths.

The Greater Ohio Showmen's Association has estimated a direct financial impact on their member businesses of around \$184 million. These are direct losses of business for our Ohio concession, ride and game businesses. These are multigenerational businesses. We need to get them back to sustainability by giving them the go-ahead to operate.

The economic losses caused by the inability to operate fairs and events will also cause and exacerbate deferred maintenance. Without a stable way to make incomes, our fairgrounds and other properties are suffering severe consequences. They keep a maintenance schedule that has been disrupted. This is going to cause them to have even higher cost down the line if their grounds are not maintained. It is absolutely critical for them to return to operation.

Ohio is at risk of losing ride and concession businesses forever. Our mobile ride companies were left sidelined for all of 2020 while they had to watch the large commercial parks get the go-ahead to open. They simply won't survive another year like 2020 if we don't act and approve these safe operation protocols. If you can ride a ride safely at a large park, you can ride one safely on a midway. We must not choose winners and losers among Ohio businesses.

We do not have time to wait, Governor. Our state's first festivals usually begin in April and our county fairs start in June. They need to have their contracts in place to host these events now. They need to make sure they have their plans in place to abide by these protocols, ensure they have adequate sanitation, and do all of the other things that go into prepping for an event. We cannot stress enough that these event organizers prioritize safety. We think that is demonstrated by them proactively coming up with the attached proposed safety guidelines.

The COVID-19 numbers are going down, the vaccine is being distributed, kids are going back to school, other restrictions are being lifted--and several fairs operated safely in 2020 by employing safe, healthy standards. Now is the time to give our community fairs, festivals and supporting businesses the direction they need to move forward with the 2021 planning.

We strongly urge the swift adoption of these proposed safety guidelines. Thank you for your consideration.

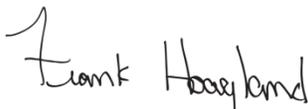
Sincerely,



Senator Tim Schaffer
20th District



Representative Don Jones
95th District



Senator Frank Hoagland
30th District



Representative Kyle Koehler
79th District