

OHLA Provides Testimony in Support of Legislation to Address Repeat Juvenile Felony Offenders

The Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association continued efforts to address the crisis-level problem of break-ins and auto thefts targeting hotel parking facilities by appearing at the Ohio Statehouse to provide [testimony in favor of House Bill 343](#), sponsored by State Representative Brian Lorenz (R-Powell).



The legislation would require juvenile courts in the state to sentence delinquent minors who commit felony level theft or vandalism to the custody of the Ohio Department of Youth Services for varying terms, depending on the level of felony. View [bill analysis](#) or [full text](#) for complete details.

OHLA's President & CEO Joe Savarise told the members of the Ohio House Judiciary Committee that the positive economic impacts produced by our industry, and indeed the entire travel economy, have been threatened in recent years by a proliferation of crimes perpetrated against hotels, their patrons and their employees. He shared specific economic impacts provided by hotels in 2025 when it examined the program and produced a [comprehensive report](#).

"OHLA supports House Bill 343 as a positive step because we also know from experience that a large percentage of these crimes are being committed by repeat juvenile offenders," Savarise said in his testimony. "Law enforcement officers at the patrol and command level regularly share information and examples with victimized individuals and businesses of their experiences when apprehending juvenile suspects, including regularly seeing those suspects released from custody even before the arresting officer is done with their paperwork at the juvenile facility."



Rep. Brian Lorenz

OHLA met with Rep. Lorenz in 2025 to share experiences of hoteliers and the details of the data provided by hotels about the large number of break-ins and thefts that victimize guests, travelers, employees, establishments and events in the central Ohio region. The lawmaker also received multiple complaints from other businesses including retailers, shopping center managers, and commercial property owners who reported ongoing incidents of vandalism and theft. Lorenz pointed out that in many of these cases, the offenders are juveniles; often the same ones who repeatedly commit these crimes.

In his [sponsor testimony to the committee](#), Lorenz explained that since judges currently have no obligation to impose secure confinement, regardless of how often the behavior occurs, a revolving door system is created, leaving victims feeling powerless and failing to hold repeat offenders accountable. He said that House Bill 343 ends that revolving door with a narrow, and fully mandatory approach.

OHLA reinforced in its testimony the fact that the juvenile court, local law enforcement, and local elected officials have often referred to the fact that Ohio's legislature creates juvenile justice

statutes, and updating those would be necessary for any hope of change to the failing system.

In a letter received by OHLA in May from the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas Division of Domestic Relations and Juvenile Branch, the Administrative Judge stated, “...the Juvenile Court does not create statutes; rather it is responsible for interpreting and enforcing them as established by the legislative branch. Laws concerning offenses, their legal elements, and the potential consequences for adjudicated youth are determined by the legislature.”

Regularly confronted with that rationale when seeking help for hotel and lodging businesses, Savarise said it is necessary to advocate for and support change to Ohio statutes impacting repeat felony juvenile offenders.

“The frustration and anger of those impacted day after day is palpable. There is a widespread belief that the punishment does not fit the crime, accountability is an obsolete notion, and that the criminal justice system is letting down those who invest in and contribute to building up our communities,” he testified.

The OHLA study of 32 hotels that provided data in the central Ohio market revealed that in an 8-month period, 959 separate incidents of break-ins, thefts and vandalism occurred just at those hotels. Numerous individual hotels suffered between 30 and 60 incidents in that time frame and two hotels reported more than 100 incidents. Nearly 300 examples of negative guest comments during this period were shared publicly, reflecting the perception of the city and region as unsafe. Many hotels report guns as items being targeted for theft, linking the problem to gun crime. Hotels reported more than \$1.25 million in direct annual security & safety expenses related to the problem, and nearly \$1 million in lost revenue.

All of this is leading to potentially irreparable damage to our ability to attract and maintain business, including large events. Numerous media reports in 2025 referenced groups and organizations expressing their frustration and their consideration of not returning to a locale or the state because of their bad experiences. It is impacting events at the Ohio Expo Center, where the state is making significant investment that needs to be protected. The problem was even covered by national trade media in the meetings and event industry, which inflicts reputational damage on the entire state and subverts the work we all put into promoting Ohio as a place to live, work, play and visit through the Ohio – the Heart of it All campaign.

Next Steps and How to Take Action

House Bill 343 will be deliberated in the Ohio House Judiciary Committee, which can ultimately vote to recommend passage by the full House. After a vote on the House floor, the bill would be considered by the Ohio Senate. Ohio’s current General Assembly runs through December of this year, but will have breaks prior to the primary and general elections in May and November.

OHLA members can voice their support of H.B. 343 to their elected members of the legislature via email or by phone. You can find your lawmakers using your address with the search function on [this webpage](#). The results will have email links and phone numbers for lawmakers.

[View simple bullet points on why we ask lawmakers to support H.B. 343.](#)

For more information or other steps you can take, contact:

Joe Savarise, President & CEO
PH: (614) 461-6462 E: joe@ohla.org
Michael Evans, OHLA Government Affairs Representative
PH: (614) 560-3929 E: michael@allphaseconsulting.com

OHIO HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION
175 S. THIRD ST. SUITE 170
COLUMBUS OH 43215-1564