

Proponent Testimony on House Bill 531
House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee
Dennis Lehman, Executive Vice President of Business, Cleveland Indians
Tuesday, March 20, 2018

Chairman Blessing, Vice-Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony on House Bill 531, legislation to establish the Sports Event Grant Fund to make grants under Ohio's Major Sporting Event Grant Program.

My name is Dennis Lehman and I am the Executive Vice President of Business for the Cleveland Indians organization. House Bill 531 is important to provide much needed back-stopping of the expenses associated with hosting large-scale events in Cleveland and across Ohio.

We are excited that the 2019 Major League All-Star Game will take place at Progressive Field and are working with our local partners at the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission, the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County to prepare for the event.

Ohio established the Major Sporting Event Grant Program in 2009 to assist local organizing committees in securing very large competitively bid sporting events. To qualify, an event must be projected to generate at least \$250,000 in an incremental increase in the state sales tax. The event then qualifies for a grant that is half the anticipated increase.

Historically, the program has been funded on a biennial basis, which has proven challenging because there is no assurance that the program will be funded in out-years. Cleveland, for example, bid the All-Star Game in 2014. House Bill 531 will create the certainty needed for this program by dedicating half of the incremental increase in the state sales tax that is attributed to an event to the Sports Event Grant Fund.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important topic. I ask for your support of House Bill 531 and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.