



**Proponent Testimony on House Bill 531**  
**House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee**

Dave Jenkins, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer  
Cleveland Browns

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, which would establish the Sports Event Grant Fund to make grants under Ohio's Major Sporting Event Grant Program.

My name is Dave Jenkins and I oversee much of the business operations of the Cleveland Browns. We became aware of HB 531 through our work with the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission, with whom the Browns have partnered on many great events. This legislation is very important to the Browns because it will enhance Northeast Ohio's ability to continue to secure major sports events that are great for the region.

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. 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, and the bid process for these events often occurs several years in advance. Additionally, the existing program contains a \$500,000 cap on the amount of the grant, which limits the support available for the largest and most significant events. For these reasons, HB 531 is needed as it will create a long-term funding mechanism for this program, and make Ohio competitive with the many other states that offer similar incentives to attract major sporting events.

HB 531 would contribute half of the incremental state sales tax increase attributable to a qualifying event to the grant fund. Grants would then be made from the fund to fulfill a portion of the obligations required by a site selection organization (such as the NFL). We view this bill as a win-win, since the state would continue to receive half of the incremental increase in state sales tax, and Ohio's hotel, lodging and tourism industries will continue to recognize the strong economic impact resulting from major sporting events being held in Ohio. Additionally, the bill provides for oversight as post-event reporting is required to confirm event impact metrics were reached.

As you may know, the Browns, along with the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission and the Pro Football Hall of Fame, are bidding to host the 2019 or 2020 NFL draft, and our joint bid is currently one of five finalists. In its selection process, the NFL explicitly considers the availability of incentives such as that which HB 531 would provide. In my opinion, the passage of HB 531 would strengthen our bid and increase the likelihood that the NFL draft, one of the largest sporting events in the country, will be held in Northeast Ohio within the next two years.

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