



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

Ryan Chenault – Team President
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Chairman Blessing, Vice-Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written 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 Ryan Chenault and I am the Team President of Ohio Machine Lacrosse, a professional lacrosse team playing at Fortress Obetz – the nation's first professional lacrosse specific stadium – located in Obetz, Ohio. I became aware of HB 531 through my involvement as a board member with Greater Columbus Sports Commission. This issue is important to me, and the entire lacrosse community within the state, because of the situation that the game finds itself statewide. While it is widely known, lacrosse is an emerging sport that is amongst the fastest growing at all levels nationwide. What people are starting to realize is that Ohio is leading the way in this growth. In fact, just last year US Lacrosse Magazine declared that "2017 was Ohio's Year in Lacrosse." When you combine the success on the field of the Ohio Machine (2017 Major League Lacrosse Champions), Ohio State Men's Lacrosse (NCAA DI National Finalist) and Denison Men's Lacrosse (NCAA DIII Final Four) with the growth and the support of the game across the state as seen in a second NCAA DI Men's varsity program starting (Cleveland State), the announcement from Akron and Kent State that they will be adding women's lacrosse to the portfolio of varsity sports and the Ohio High School Athletic Association officially adopting boy's and girl's lacrosse as sanctioned sports, it is easy to see why the nation has their eyes on Ohio lacrosse. This increased exposure and growth has led to Ohio being considered for more national lacrosse events than ever before. Bringing these events to the state will only further enhance the stature of Ohio within the lacrosse community, but we need help in enticing these events to consider our great state.



To that end, 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. Cleveland, for example, is already bidding on events for 2025. For this reason, HB 531 is needed as it will create a long-term funding mechanism for this program.

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.

Key support

- HB 531 is needed to ensure Ohio will remain competitive with the other 34 states that also offer incentives to attract major sporting events.
- Ohio's hotel and lodging industry sees the strong economic impact that results from the state hosting large scale sporting events.
- The state would continue to receive half of the incremental increase in state sales tax, so we view this legislation as a win-win. Local governments will not face financial exposure with how this language is written.
- Post-event reporting is required to confirm event impact metrics were reached.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony on this important topic to our state and industry and I ask for your support of House Bill 531. If I can provide any more additional information on the state of the game within Ohio or our needs as an emerging sport, I would be happy to assist. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ryan Chenault
Ohio Machine Lacrosse – Team President