



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

Jon A. Steinbrecher, Commissioner

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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 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 Jon Steinbrecher and I am the commissioner of the Mid-American Conference, an NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision conference headquartered in Cleveland, with six member institutions in the state of Ohio. I became aware of HB 531 through the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission. This issue is important to me/my organization because we are active in hosting NCAA championship events in the state of Ohio. For instance, just last week the Mid-American Conference hosted the NCAA Division I Wrestling Championships at Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland, establishing both a record for overall attendance for the event and a single-session attendance record.

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. More specifically, the Mid-American Conference is one of eight finalists for the NCAA Division I Women's Final Four. In addition to the money we will expend to underwrite the bid process (likely in excess of \$75,000), we will need to raise more than \$2.5 million to support the event. For this reason, HB 531 is needed as it will create a long-term funding mechanism to assist in this effort.

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.

On behalf of the member institutions of the Mid-American Conference, 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.

