

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, my name is Todd Lieberman and I am here today to testify as a Proponent of H.B. 525.

Even though I've lived in Los Angeles for over 20 years, my roots are deep in Ohio. I was born in suburban Cleveland, Lyndhurst to be exact, and then moved to Pepper Pike when I was ten years old. From the age of five through 18, I attended Hawken School and remain close the institution and the people there. Beyond the multitude of family members I still have in Ohio (I visit at least twice a year), my sports allegiances have never wavered. Indians, Cavs, Browns all the way. And even more important than my own sports allegiances, I have raised my two LA-born boys, 13 and 9, to be die-hard Cleveland sports fans as well. This is all to say, I am, and will always be a Clevelander and Ohio boy. I grew up in the theater as an actor/writer/director and idea of the film business and Hollywood felt so foreign to me. LA felt like another planet and the idea of a film shooting in Cleveland would have excited me unimaginably. So yes, I live in LA, but home is Ohio.

I'm co-owner of Mandeville Films, a Disney-based production company founded in 1994. We've produced over 35 feature films and are preparing to shoot another this summer. Some of our titles include WONDER, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, THE MUPPETS, THE PROPOSAL and THE FIGHTER. Our movies have won three Academy Awards from 11 nominations, and grossed over \$4.5 billion in worldwide box office.

Cleveland is essential to who I am as a person and as a storyteller; its culture has instilled in me a work ethic, dedication, and compassion that I try to bring to every project I produce and I couldn't be prouder of my Ohio roots.

It's always been a dream of mine (and my mother's!) to film in Cleveland. The beautiful tree-lined topography, the gritty parts of the city, the new and updated parts of downtown, the industrial areas, the water, the spectacular turn-of-the-century mansions, the sports stadiums, etc...the list goes on and on. Cleveland offers so much as far as looks go and I know that there are many areas in the state that offer the same and more.

By expanding the amount of credits to \$100 million, you send a clear message to me and others in the Hollywood community that Ohio is serious about the film business, and that it wants to support filmmakers. By passing this legislation, you encourage not only more projects, but bigger projects to come to Ohio. You put Ohio in the company of states like Louisiana, Massachussets, and Georgia, which are among the most accommodating to film productions and the most competitive for our business. Both Insurgent and Allegiant (from the Divergent franchise) were filmed in Atlanta and I would have loved to be able to bring those resources to Ohio. We spent over \$140 million on those films combined in the state of Georgia and scenically, there is nothing in those films that would have specified Atlanta or disqualified Ohio.

With a larger cap and more flexibility, producers like myself are provided with the tools needed to make the proper location and incentive arguments to studios and financiers. The opportunity to invest more in the local resources of Ohio benefits local electricians, carpenters, artists,

painters, actors, food providers, restaurants, hotels, etc... Additionally, whatever income I earn while filming in the state of Ohio, I am paying Ohio income tax on. When above the line talent (actors, directors, producers) are making in the millions, this can add up nicely for the state. While I am not an economist, I can anecdotally say that people are always grateful for the work in the rebate states I film in. There always seems to be an ecosystem that forms which in turn, drives more people to the state seeking out employment. I can only imagine this is good for local businesses, taxes, etc...

Take Atlanta, for instance. I've shot three movies there: the first in 2004 (one year before Georgia introduced its tax credit) and the most recent in 2014. In that ten-year time span, my cost to rent in Atlanta tripled. Everyone I talked to, including then-Mayor Kasim Reed, attributed this spike in property values to the influx of people brought in by Atlanta's rapidly-growing film industry. The industry's employment growth was outstripping that of the aggregate state economy, and new businesses (such as prop suppliers and specialized accounting firms) had sprung up in response to the demands of Atlanta's film industry. I was astounded. In only a decade, the city of Atlanta had created year-round job opportunities in or connected to film and TV production that increased the profitability of its real estate threefold. It's my firm opinion as a film industry professional and as a businessman that this would not have been possible without tax incentives.

It seems to me that expanding the tax credit would grow the amount of productions in Ohio, which would in turn create more opportunities for film students at places like Tri-C and CSU. I'm personally excited by the idea of offering these undergraduates hands-on experience and the opportunity to build relationships that will strengthen the film community throughout Ohio. This could be a key component in reaching the ultimate goal of building a self-sustaining film ecosystem in Ohio that could eventually support larger facilities like sound stages, post-production houses, visual effects companies, and studios for mixing and sound recording. By harnessing its creative talent, and indeed talent across the country, I see no reason why Ohio can't have a thriving film economy.

Additionally, this feels like an opportune time to continue nourishing Cleveland's home grown filmmakers and talent. Last year, I came to Hawken to screen WONDER for its students and faculty, and couldn't believe how astute they were about filmmaking, the process and the desire to create. As curious new filmmakers emerge and grow in Ohio, the opportunity to stay in Ohio to create would be wonderful for them and the state.

Yes, Los Angeles still has Hollywood but truthfully, of the last 20 movies I've made, only three were shot in LA. I would love to add Ohio to the list of true film-friendly locations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of H.B. 525. I am available to answer any questions you may have.