



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

November 14, 2017

To: Chairman Schaffer and members of the House Ways and Means Committee  
From: Dick Bennett, CEO, Lake County YMCA  
Re: HB 177

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The Ohio Alliance of YMCAs is a nonprofit organization that represents the 165 YMCAs throughout Ohio. We are a grassroots driven and governed organization that advocates and educates on behalf of the YMCAs and their mission.

Until the mid-1990s, Ohio YMCAs were tax exempt in all aspects of their mission work. Then, the legislature imposed sales tax on memberships, making Ohio only one of five states that tax nonprofit fitness memberships.

House Bill 177 would return Ohio YMCAs ask to full tax exempt status, as they should be as 501(c)(3)s. Taxing memberships is unjust and runs contrary to our organizations' charitable nonprofit purpose.

A YMCA should not have to tax a youth that comes after school to a safe place to participate in healthy activities such as swimming, basketball, or playing chess in a teen room, or a senior citizen who comes to the Y to participate in activities that help them stay healthy, active, and social.

YMCAs are charitable, nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations that are dedicated to youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Every day we take on challenges that will shape our communities' futures - challenges like the academic achievement gap, chronic disease, and social isolation.

Together with our members, volunteers, and community partners, we make our communities stronger by:

- Driving academic achievement and inspiring kids to reach their greatest potential with high quality early childhood education and before and after school support.
- Tackling our community's greatest health challenges and improving quality of life, such as leading the state in providing the National Diabetes Prevention Program.
- Ensuring access and inclusion so that everyone has a chance to succeed and belong by providing financial assistance to those in need.

Like nonprofit hospitals, YMCAs provide immense community benefit. In 2016:

- YMCAs contributed over \$23 million in financial assistance to those who could not otherwise afford a membership.
- Over 29,000 volunteers donated over \$2.8 million worth of time.
- The Lake County YMCA, my YMCA, contributed over \$940,000 in financial assistance for memberships and programs to serve almost 2,500 families in need.



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YMCAs are not taxed on other programs and services, such as summer camp and fitness classes, only memberships. Without a membership, individuals and families are not able to experience everything that Ys have to offer.

The dollars YMCAs collect from members and remit for sales tax could be used to provide more financial assistance to those who cannot afford to be a member and participate in programs.

Our programs help in the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases like diabetes, and obesity. Our Ys help children with special needs and weekend food programs for children during the school year and throughout the summer.

Removing the sales tax would allow YMCAs to lower their rates, making it more affordable to those who are struggling financially but are too proud or even embarrassed to ask for help.

With dramatically increasing healthcare costs, Ohioans need incentives to get healthy and stay healthy. Let us be that incentive. With your support we can continue to do what we do best - change lives and continue to be a positive impact on our communities. We are so much more than a fitness center or a gym. We are a truly a cause.

Thank you for your time and consideration.