



## The Jewish Community Center of Greater Columbus

October 27, 2019

Ohio House of Representatives  
Committee on Way & Means

Dear Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Rogers, and  
Members of the Committee,

My name is Mike Klapper, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Columbus. With my almost 28 years of JCC experience, I am writing to you in that capacity, as well as on behalf of our sister JCC's across the state, to support the non-profit gym tax exemption legislation.

Because Jewish Community Centers are not a fitness club, but a community center, and we'd ask to be treated as such.

### **Who we are; what we do**

For over 100 years here in Columbus, our JCC has provided the Jewish community and the general community, with critical services to the elderly, young children, families and individuals. JCCs are open seven days a week, often from 5:30 AM to 10 PM, to meet the community's needs.

As part of our services, we do have some fitness equipment and programming because taking care of your body is a core Jewish value. But we also have an early childhood center, which is the JCCs largest program, summer camps, and senior programming. We are also serving families with special needs children.

To remain financially viable, the JCC has to cover our costs, but we also look out for the most vulnerable in community members to ensure they can also access our offerings. This year we will provide over a quarter of a million dollars (\$250,000) in financial assistance for early childhood, after school care, and summer programs.

At the other end of life's spectrum, we are serving nearly two thousand (2,000) seniors, and we provide – in collaboration with the Lifecare Alliance – 13,000 kosher meals to the frail elderly. We are the only site in all of Franklin County, and the region, to provide these kosher meals.

There's something  
about this place.™

[www.columbusjcc.org](http://www.columbusjcc.org)

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**Rick Meizlish**  
Board President  
**Mike Klapper**  
CEO

It might seem obvious to me, but I'd like to point out that although it is called the Jewish Community Center, some forty percent (40%) of our membership is not Jewish.

What's true for us is by and large, true for our fellow JCC's across Ohio.

### **Columbus JCC is Part of a Network**

For example, the Mandel Jewish Community Center in Cleveland provides well over \$400,000 per year in scholarship assistance spanning its camps, early childhood, and general membership programs.

They also run a program for visually impaired seniors and in partnership with ten local school districts, provide on-site job training programs for young adults with developmental disabilities.

And, despite being in the heart of Ohio's largest Jewish community, they too serve the wider community: over one-third of their membership is not Jewish.

This is all a way of saying that we are so much more than a gym membership. We are a community center, and are focused on serving the community. We unite the community, and as a nonprofit, we take any revenue we make and reinvest it directly back into providing for our mission work and for services for all.

### **Conclusion:**

The ability to lower our membership price would make our programs more accessible to even more people.

I urge you to reverse this tax policy and join 45 other states that do not tax nonprofit centers providing this important array of services to so many.

Thank you for your time and considering my request.

Sincerely,



Mike Klapper  
Chief Executive Officer