



**The Jewish Community Center  
of Greater Columbus**

*JCC Preschools voted #1 in Columbus*

**Ohio House of Representatives | Committee on Ways & Means  
Testimony in Support: HB 177 Carol Folkerth  
Columbus, OH | October 10, 2017**

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Rogers and Members of the Committee:

Good morning.

My name is Carol Folkerth, and I am the Executive Director of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Columbus. As a member of the National Board of Jewish Community Centers and with my almost 35 years of JCC experience, I am here in that capacity, as well as on behalf of our sister JCC's across the state, to support HB 177.

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.

Yes, 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 the primary mission at the JCC is taking care of our youngest and most vulnerable in the early childhood center, summer camps and after school care for children and youth and caring for our frail elderly senior population.

To remain financially viable, the JCC has to cover our costs, but the focus is on our mission work and community service.

This year the JCC 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 serving nearly two thousand (2,000) seniors, and provide – in collaboration with 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 hot kosher meals which for 80% of our clients is the only hot meal they have that day.

For over 50 years the JCC has been serving families with a child with special needs: 50 campers, 4-21 years of age, with special challenges from Autism to Cerebral Palsy to difficult behavioral situations, find the JCC home for the summer for day camp.

**There's something  
about this place.**

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

**JCC Main Campus**  
1125 College Ave  
Columbus, OH 43209  
614.231.2731

**JCC New Albany**  
150 E. Dublin-Granville Rd.  
New Albany, OH 43054  
614.855.4885

**JCC North**  
6121 Orlentongy River Rd  
Worthington, OH 43085  
614.764.2414

**Jennifer Gammeyer**  
Board President  
**Carol Folkerth**  
Executive Director

It might seem obvious to me, but I'd like to point out that although it is called the Jewish Community Center, more than 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.

We are a community center, and are focused on serving the community.

The JCC unites the community, and as a nonprofit, takes any revenue we make and reinvests 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.

The JCC Board of Trustees and membership of 7500 individuals urges 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. I'm happy to answer any questions.