

Ohio House of Representatives | Committee on Ways and Means
Testimony in Support: HB 177 | Marc Fisher
Cincinnati, OH | October 4, 2017

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

Good afternoon,

My name is Marc Fisher, and I am the CEO of the Mayerson Jewish Community Center of Cincinnati. I write to you today on behalf of our fellow JCCs across the state to support HB 177. Jewish Community Centers are true to our name; we are not merely fitness clubs, but community centers, and we'd like ensure that we are treated in accordance with that role.

For more than 85 years here in Cincinnati, our JCC has provided both the Jewish community and the wider community with critical services for seniors, children, families, and individuals. JCCs are open seven days per week, often from 5:30am-10pm, to meet the needs of the community.

As part of our wide range of services, we do offer a fitness center, which aligns with a core Jewish value of taking care of one's body. Our fitness center also attracts a large percentage of community members who are not Jewish, thus expanding and strengthening our community as a whole, and promoting our values of openness, accessibility, and inclusion.

We also have a respected Early Childhood school, summer camps, and an array of senior programming which caters to the unique needs of that population, Jewish and non-Jewish alike.

To remain financially viable, the JCC must cover our costs, but we also look out for the most vulnerable community members to ensure their equal access to our offerings, as well as their general wellbeing.

Last year, we provided more than \$150,000 in financial assistance for our Early Childhood School, summer camps, sports leagues, and memberships. We provide more than 1,200 programs each year to more than 1,800 Cincinnati-area seniors. Our Meals on Wheels program reaches more than 200 homebound seniors every week, providing more than 40,000 meals each year. We are the only Meals on Wheels program in the region that offers kosher meals to those seniors who require them.

We established the Milton and Frances Schloss Special Needs and Services Department in 2013 to develop and expand programming and services to support and enrich the lives of individuals with special needs and their families, including inclusive and adapted programming, and inclusion advocates for campers with special needs during summer camp.

We are proud to be a part of the network of the JCC Association; our sister JCCs in Columbus and Cleveland provide their communities with similar support systems, as well as specialized

programs for visually impaired seniors, students with developmental disabilities, and many more.

This is all a way of saying that we are so much more than a gym membership. We are a community center, focused on serving as a gathering place for community members from all backgrounds, of all faiths, and of all abilities. We unite the community, and as a 501c3 nonprofit organization, we reinvest any revenue back into our mission, providing services for all.

In conclusion, the ability to lower our membership price would make our programs even more accessible to a wider range of people. We urge you to reverse this tax policy and join 45 other states that do not tax nonprofit centers, which provide such an important array of services to so many.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

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