



**Proponent Testimony on House Bill 531**

**Senate Finance Committee**

November 27, 2018

Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony on House Bill 531, which would establish the Sports Event Grant Fund to make grants under Ohio's Major Sporting Event Grant Program.

My name is Dennis Lehman and I am the Executive Vice President of Business for the Cleveland Indians. As a board member for the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission, I understand the importance that this bill would provide much needed back-stopping of potential expenses associated with large scale events in downtown Cleveland, like the 2019 Major League All-Star Game.

Ohio established the Major Sporting Event Grant Program in 2009 to assist local organizing committees in securing very large competitively bid sporting events. To qualify, an event must be projected to generate at least \$250,000 in an incremental increase in the state sales tax. Historically, the program has been funded on a biennial basis, which has proven challenging because there is no assurance that the program will be funded in out-years. Cleveland, for example, bid the All-Star Game in 2014. For this reason, HB 531 is needed as it will create a long-term funding mechanism for this program.

HB 531 would contribute half of the incremental state sales tax increase attributable to a qualifying event to the grant fund. Grants would then be made from the fund to fulfill a portion of the Sports Commissions obligations required by Major League Baseball, in our case, in particular.

I ask for your support of House Bill 531. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important topic.