

Testimony before the Ohio Senate Finance Committee

Andrew James Myers

Good Deed Entertainment

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as an interested party on HB 166, specifically on the matter of the Ohio Motion Picture Tax Credit.

My name is Andrew Myers, and I am a Creative Executive at Good Deed Entertainment, or GDE for short. We are a brick-and-mortar film studio with headquarters in Ashland, Ohio, focused on financing, producing, and distributing independent feature films. Although originally founded in Los Angeles, we relocated our headquarters to Ashland last fall.

Uprooting our company from the heart of Hollywood to small town Ashland, Ohio, population 20,000, was not a decision we took lightly. Over the past five years, GDE has grown into an established player in the independent film industry. Last year, our film *Loving Vincent* was nominated for an Academy Award. This year we are releasing more than a dozen films in theaters nationwide and on every major digital platform. With that kind of rapid growth, we researched our long-term options, and we realized Ohio's film industry was a perfect fit for a new home base. Our founder, and CEO, Scott Donley, was born in Ohio, and has lived in Ashland for more than 30 years. Since founding GDE in Los Angeles in 2014, Mr. Donley had kept his residence in Ohio and commuted to Los Angeles, often multiple times a month. Because GDE had established itself in the industry, we had fewer reasons to be physically located in LA — and that's when the benefits of moving to Ohio became clear.

First, we recognized that Ohio has a robust community of film production craftspeople covering the entire spectrum of creative and technical skills. Sit through the credits of any movie and you'll see the names of dozens or hundreds of different craftspeople, all with different skill sets and job titles. Over the past ten years, the state of Ohio has invested in building and sustaining this skilled workforce through the Motion Picture Tax Credit. By the same token, eliminating the tax credit would decimate the talent pool we are counting on tapping into for our film productions.

Second, the Motion Picture Tax Credit is one of the most competitive film production incentives in the nation, which meant we'd be on an even playing field with the big studios in other cities. We could be making films in a number of states, but for Mr. Donley, investing in Ohio film productions meant giving back to his home community. We believe the Motion Picture Tax Credit should give priority to brick-and-mortar companies with Ohio roots, because we are building the infrastructure for a stable, sustainable industry.

Third, we wanted to build our lives in Ohio. On a personal note, when I realized I could stay in a career I loved without staying in LA, I jumped at the chance. Five months ago, I pulled into the driveway of our first home, with my wife, my 9-year-old son, and my 8-year-old daughter. I'm supporting them with a steady middle-class job, and we are proud to be putting down roots in a small town with such a strong sense of community. My coworkers feel the same way.

Three of our executives, myself included, previously taught film classes at UCLA and USC, and we are working to build mentorship relationships with film programs in the region. Since January, GDE has already provided internship opportunities for film students from six

different Ohio colleges and universities, who have all been incredibly eager to learn directly from individuals actively working in the film industry. We have been hearing the same message over and over from these students: they are hungry for opportunities to stay in Ohio to build their careers and lives. We see ourselves in a prime position to help end the “brain drain” of young creative talent leaving Ohio for media capitals like LA, New York, and Atlanta.

GDE’s core executive staff currently includes six full-time Ohio-based employees and we anticipate rapid growth. We intend to begin our first Ohio film production this fall, which would employ around one hundred Ohio residents. For the next three years our goal is to ramp up to a slate of five to six original productions per year to be shot in Ohio. If the tax credit is not renewed, all of those plans will be put in immediate jeopardy.

The motion picture industry in Ohio is cultivating talent, building infrastructure, and attracting investment. In short, the tax credits are working. Our company is proof of that. We ask that you please continue and expand the Motion Picture tax credit program to take full advantage of this opportunity.

Chair Dolan and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.