



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

May 18, 2021

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee - thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Substitute House Bill 110. My name is Woody Fitton and I have the pleasure as serving as the President/CEO of the Great Miami Valley YMCA. I am here today testifying on behalf of the Ohio Alliance of YMCAs, of which I am the current chair. The Ohio Alliance is a nonprofit organization that represents the 162 YMCAs throughout the state. We are a grassroots driven and governed organization that advocates and educates on behalf of the YMCAs and their mission.

I would like to discuss two priorities important to support YMCAs serving their communities.

Day Camp and Before and After School Support

First, the Ohio Alliance of YMCAs would like to thank the Ohio House of Representatives for their support for the Ys before and after school and summer day camp programs.

Ohio YMCAs provide over 500 before and after school and summer day camp programs throughout the year, making YMCAs the single largest school age childcare provider in Ohio. As the largest provider, YMCAs are deeply concerned about the impacts of COVID-19 on the academic achievement, social-emotional development, and physical and nutritional health of Ohio's young people.

As we look ahead, we need strong leadership to ensure that Ohio's youth have the support they need to catch up and re-engage in school and community life. Fortunately, our YMCAs are taking steps today to help address learning loss and support students and their families this summer and school year.

The amendment that was submitted before the House would allocate \$5 million each fiscal year to Ohio YMCAs day camp and before and after school programs to help students with learning loss and mental health issues related to COVID-19. We are thankful for the \$500,000 that was allocated in the House, which is a great start that will assist in our programs across the state.

Because of the pandemic, our children are experiencing educational instability, mental health challenges, and social isolation. These effects already are being observed and felt in school and before and after school settings. For these reasons, we will continue to advocate for the full \$5 million each fiscal year to provide resources to equip our camp counselors and afterschool teachers to serve these challenged students properly.



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Sales Tax

Our second priority relates to repealing the sales tax the state imposes on nonprofit fitness memberships. Until the mid-1990s, Ohio YMCAs were tax exempt in all aspects of their mission work until the legislature imposed this tax.

Ohio YMCAs ask to return to full tax exempt status, as they should be as 501(c)(3)s. Taxing memberships is unjust and runs contrary to our organizations' charitable nonprofit purpose.

A YMCA should not have to tax a member, such as a youth that comes after school to a safe place to participate in healthy activities; or a senior citizen who comes to the Y to connect with others and engage in programs that help them stay healthy and active.

YMCAs are charitable, nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations that are dedicated to youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Every day we take on challenges that will shape our communities' futures - challenges like the academic achievement gap, chronic disease, and social isolation. In the pandemic, YMCAs stepped into the fray to provide even more community supports such as emergency shelter for first responders, child care for first responders' children, and feeding programs.

Like nonprofit hospitals, YMCAs provide immense community benefit. In 2019:

- YMCAs contributed over \$23 million in financial assistance to those who could not otherwise afford a membership.
- Over 29,000 volunteers donated over \$2.8 million worth of time.

YMCAs are not taxed on other programs and services, such as summer camp and fitness classes, only memberships.

The dollars YMCAs collect from members and remit for sales tax could be used to provide more financial assistance to those who cannot afford to be a member and participate in programs, or allow YMCAs to lower their rates.

With dramatically increased social isolation and healthcare costs, Ohioans need incentives to get connected back to community and be healthy. Let us be that incentive. With your support we can continue to do what we do best - change lives and continue to be a positive impact on our communities. We are so much more than a fitness center or a gym. We are a truly a cause.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for your time. We look forward to continuing to work together to find ways to support Ohio's communities. I would be happy to answer any questions.