

Testimony of Kyle Ross on behalf of the Tennis In The Land WTA Tour event before the Ohio Senate Select Committee on Gaming in Support of Senate Bill 176

May 26th, 2021 — Chairman Schuring, ranking member Thomas, and members of the committee; thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the committee. My name is Kyle Ross; I work with Topnotch Management, a sports management agency based in Cleveland. I am the Tournament Director for Tennis in the Land, an annual WTA Tour event in Cleveland and a member of the US Open Series, and I submit this testimony on behalf of our event.

As a brief point of background, women's tennis is the most popular women's sport in the world, and globally tennis is the second most bet upon sport in the world, behind only soccer. Our event will be broadcast live around the country and the world, proudly representing the state of Ohio throughout, and creating significant betting and revenue opportunities for Ohioans and for sportsbooks operated in Ohio. I submit this testimony independent of any other group or coalition, I am simply representing the interests of our organization and our event.

My interest today is in making a few clarifying points for the committee's consideration as it relates to fair market access for Ohio's professional sports organizations, and to advocate for amending the language regulating the Type A license group to specifically allow for Ohio-based professional sports organizations to control one mobile license each. We emphatically support the structures we have seen in other states that have recognized the importance of providing fair market access to hometown clubs and events, as a point of extending license to the very producers of the sports content to be bet upon. We also feel strongly that it is necessary for integrity reasons to allow the professional sports organizations to designate a licensed, regulated betting partner to manage operations.

Where my position differs from my colleagues in the Ohio professional sports space, however, is in total number of online licenses to be distributed, and the determination of which professional sports organizations are awarded those Type A licenses through the language of the legislation. There is a lot of discussion regarding the equity of online license control, however you could certainly forgive someone for thinking that online licenses could only be awarded to professional men's sports organizations and not women's. If language speaking towards Ohio-based professional sports properties is to be included in the legislation, which we whole-heartedly support, to consider only men's sports organizations seems ill-advised, especially considering the outsized profile of WTA Tour events in the betting market.

The commercial opportunities provided by the market access we're discussing offer significant value to sports organizations to which they would be awarded, and it is my position that the inclusion of some professional sports organizations but the exclusion of others, especially when there is such clear merit for the inclusion of our WTA Tour event as an Ohio-based sports organization, is something that needs to be navigated with consideration.

I want to emphasize that this testimony is intended to advocate for the premise that, should such language be amended to provide online licenses for Ohio-based professional sports organizations, our WTA Tour event be provided market access to one (Type A) online license. I love Ohio's men's professional sports organizations and wish to take nothing away from them, to advocate for the inclusion of ours is not to suggest the exclusion of others. I mentioned above that tennis generates more betting globally than any of our peers in MLB, NFL, NBA, NHL, or PGA; only soccer eclipses tennis. As such, we have a strong claim as valuable producers and contributors to the industry in Ohio and on this merit deserve inclusion in any distribution of online licenses awarded specifically to Ohio-based professional sports organizations.

Like our colleagues in the Ohio-based professional sports space, we are concerned with market dilution, over-saturation of licenses, and the various related challenges; however, the fact that there are eleven casinos and racinos and nine men's professional sports organizations seems to approach the twenty available licenses in a manner that is perhaps too tidy.

I respectfully submit this testimony for your consideration and appreciate the opportunity to do so.

Kyle Ross

Tournament Director

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