



Ohio Senate Finance Committee

Michael Deemer, President & CEO, Downtown Cleveland Inc.

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Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the proposed funding to assist in the relocation of the Cleveland Browns.

My name is Michael Deemer, President and CEO of Downtown Cleveland, Inc., a nonprofit organization that attracts talent, jobs, residents, and investment to Downtown Cleveland, the largest employment district in Northeast Ohio. As the only organization focused solely on strengthening and building the heart of Cleveland itself, we are working to make Downtown Cleveland a more vibrant and welcoming city center for businesses, workers, residents and visitors alike. We work from sidewalk to skyline and everything in between, leading efforts to enhance Downtown's environment, economy, and experience.

Downtowns are the lifeblood of regional economies, and building a strong, resilient downtown requires sustained collaboration among public, private and civic partners. This is not a simple talking point, it is widely supported by research and data. The International Downtown Association research supports that while downtowns typically make up only 3% of a city's land, they generate nearly 17% of citywide tax revenue and up to 30% of citywide jobs. That's density, productivity, and return on investment that suburbs simply can't match.

Cleveland is living proof, we are experiencing undeniable momentum and historic levels of investment. Our downtown is the region's largest job hub, a fast-growing residential neighborhood, and a premier destination for culture, sports, and entrepreneurship. We

have the ingredients for long-term success that can make Cleveland a world-class city and reclaim its heritage as a leading global market for business, talent and visitors.

The destructive economic impact of a potential relocation of the Cleveland Browns from downtown cannot be overstated.

This isn't just about football. It's about dispersing density, weakening the core and undermining the very momentum we've worked so hard to build. Downtown stadiums drive foot traffic to nearby businesses, connect people across neighborhoods, and generate tens of millions in tax revenue that support services citywide.

Removing that anchor—and the economic ripple effects it creates—from downtown Cleveland is a deliberate step backward for downtown, the City of Cleveland, and the entire region. It's not an additive investment; it's the cannibalization of a core regional asset at the expense of shared prosperity.

Here's the bottom line: Building a new stadium in suburban Cleveland is a risky use of taxpayer dollars that undermines the public and private investment already transforming the city's core. Renovating the existing stadium isn't just viable—it's vital to the region's continued growth.

There are three core issues at stake:

1. **This move isn't additive—it's a shift.** Relocating the stadium simply redirects jobs, tax revenue, and energy away from downtown. It also reduces the focus on lakefront development, which must remain a priority. The City of Cleveland's lakefront master plan was initially conceived with the Haslams and will be a more impactful, positive investment in the long term.
2. **The financing model is high-risk, low-reward.** The state's own Budget Office warns what is being billed as a \$600 million plan could cost more than \$1 billion—based on projections it calls inflated and unreliable.
3. **Reinvesting in downtown delivers more for less.** With over \$4 billion in development already underway—including the nearly complete Sherwin-Williams headquarters, the planned North Coast Connector between downtown and Lake Erie, upgrades to the Rock Hall and Science Center, and Bedrock's initial riverfront investments—renovating the existing stadium would accelerate momentum, not disrupt it. It's the smarter, more responsible path forward.”

As the leading voice for Downtown Cleveland business owners, community leaders, economic development and residents – we strongly encourage this committee to consider our informed and first-hand perspective on the impact of this proposed move. We request that you do not financially enable or encourage a stadium relocation that would have a profoundly devastating effect to Downtown Cleveland and the regional economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am happy to answer any questions for the committee.