



Proponent Testimony on House Bill 531

Senate Finance Committee

Dave Jenkins, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

Cleveland Browns

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Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written 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 Dave Jenkins and I oversee the business operations of the Cleveland Browns. We became aware of HB 531 through our work with the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission, with whom the Browns have partnered on many great events. This legislation is very important to the Browns because it will enhance Northeast Ohio's ability to continue to secure major sports events that are impactful for the region.

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. The program is currently funded on a biennial basis, which has proven challenging because there is no assurance that the program will be funded in out-years, and the bid process for these events often occurs several years in advance. HB 531 is needed as it will create a long-term funding mechanism for this program and make Ohio competitive with the many other states that offer similar incentives to attract major sporting events.

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 obligations required by a site selection organization (such as the NFL). We view this bill as a win-win, since the state would continue to receive half of the incremental increase in state sales tax, and Ohio's hotel, lodging and tourism industries will continue to recognize the strong economic impact resulting from major sporting events being held in Ohio. Additionally, the bill provides for oversight as post-event reporting is required to confirm event impact metrics were reached.

As you may know, the Browns, along with the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission are bidding to host the 2020 or 2021 NFL draft. In its selection process, the NFL explicitly considers the availability of incentives such as that which HB 531 would provide. Passage of HB 531 this year would greatly strengthen our bid and increase the likelihood that the NFL draft, one of the largest sporting events in the country, will be held in Northeast Ohio within the next two years.



Thank you for taking the time to consider this important legislation. I respectfully ask for your support of House Bill 531.