

Testimony of Gina Trebilcock
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Ohio Senate Finance Committee
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Chairman Dolan, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Gina Trebilcock. My husband, Mike, and I founded the Cleveland Foundry Rowing and Sailing Center. I am writing today to discuss some of our programming and why we believe that the state of Ohio will be well served by the services that the Foundry offers to the youth in Cuyahoga County.

As you know, Cuyahoga County has the highest child poverty rate in Ohio. In fact, according to the United State Census Bureau, only four cities throughout our country have a higher child poverty rate than Cleveland. Despite our community's best efforts, there continues to be a void in preparedness for Cleveland's youth to transition out of poverty into a reality where they can succeed and build the life that every Ohioan should be given an opportunity to pursue.

The Cleveland Foundry Rowing and Sailing Center was established specifically to give these kids the tools that they need to develop that skill set. Neighborhood community centers are critical to keeping our kids out of trouble when they're not in school, and I do not – in any way – mean to diminish the roles that those centers play. However, there is only so much that a child can learn, in terms of life skills, when they're there.

As our students have repeatedly said to me and the staff at The Foundry, our facility gives them the tools that they need to develop the skills necessary to emerge from the cycle of poverty that is all too familiar to them. Whether developing vocational skills through job placement that we oversee, to ensuring educational outcomes through the relationship that we have with the Cleveland Municipal School District, The Foundry's purpose is to develop life skills for these kids all of whom want to maximize what they can do.

I know that a lot of people think of rowing and sailing as elite sports activities, and there are reasons why this thought occurs. Water sports are expensive and, therefore, prohibitive to those without substantial means. Our mission at The Foundry is to provide these opportunities to all of Cleveland's youth, not just those with means. I continue to be amazed at the number of youths who come through our doors, without any direct interaction with our Great Lake or our Great River, due to these social and economic barriers.

We are striving to change this reality. Giving these kids exposure to team sports, where trust in each other and confidence navigating our water, is a tremendous opportunity for these kids to develop precisely the skills that we know are needed to excel in today's environment.

Unfortunately, there is only so much that we can do without public support. If we want to continue providing this type of environment to our youth, we cannot do it on our own. Private support and philanthropic giving can only get us so far. Given the state's investment in these

kids, we think that there is a clear link between the desired outcome that the state has set and the role that The Cleveland Foundry plays. For that reason, we are extremely grateful that the Senate has allocated \$250,000 each year of the biennium toward these services. This funding will enable us to expand these services to over 5000 youth who otherwise would not have access to such wrap-around programs.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee, thank you for your confidence in The Cleveland Foundry. We are committed to maximizing the state's investment in the youth who participate in our programming and we optimistically look forward to demonstrating that your investment in us has been put to great work.