

**Testimony submitted to the  
Senate Health Committee**

**House Bill 110**

**Chris Ronayne, University Circle, Inc.**

Chair Huffman, Vice-Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 110. I am Chris Ronayne, President of University Circle, Inc. University Circle is the community service corporation encompassing Cleveland's cultural gardens, arts and culture institutions and health care systems. Part of our mission is to create a seamless neighborhood (without borders) of active and inviting places and spaces for people of all ages to enjoy.

Our Circle Scholars program serves the school aged population residing in Cleveland's Hough, Fairfax, Glenville, Buckeye-Shaker, and St. Clair-Superior neighborhoods. Included are three programs: *Circle Scholars* after school program and *Circle Explorers* summer camp, both of which serve middle school students, and *YAY! Youth Arts Saturdays*, a learning and performance series for youth and families.

The overarching goal of these programs is to address the opportunity gap that persists between youth from lower-income families and higher-income peers by offering safe and free out-of-school-time experiences. The programs target youth in the historically segregated and under-resourced neighborhoods adjacent to University Circle. All of UCI's Community Education programs attempt to forward the idea that these institutions are available to all people, and to remove barriers.

Perhaps it is important to highlight the statistics of the area:

In the neighborhoods surrounding University Circle, of a population over 51,000, 12% are youth enrolled in grades K-8, 45% live at or below the federal poverty level, 61% are SNAP participants and 94% are people of color.

*Circle Scholars* and *Circle Explorers* will draw its participants exclusively from the rising seventh and eighth graders in eight schools in the aforementioned neighborhoods: Bolton, Daniel E. Morgan, Harvey Rice, Mary B. Martin, Mary M. Bethune, Sunbeam, Wade Park, and Willson Elementary Schools. While *YAY! Saturdays* is open to the public, the programming will be designed with the specific needs of these populations in mind, offering touchpoints for family and social services providers at each event.

UCI will offer 162 camp experiences over six weeks by offering three two-week camp experiences; youth will be able to participate in more than one session each summer. By focusing on individual leadership, career exposure, and social-emotional learning combined with an emphasis on creative problem-solving, *Circle Explorers* will build resilient citizens and contribute to a vibrant community.

The children who will participate in this program qualify for state assistance through the Temporary Assistance For Needy Family (“TANF”) Grant Program. As such, we are requesting \$300,000 annually from the State of Ohio through the state’s TANF Block Grant. This allocation is expected to expand participation in Circle Scholars after school program over two years, serving 66 students in year one and 122 students in year two. It is further anticipated that we will draw more than 250 people to each YAY! Saturday event.

It is our hope that the State of Ohio will favorably review UCI’s request so that we can continue to provide this valuable opportunity to our Middle school learners.

Thank you, I’m happy to answer any questions you might have.