

Senate Select Committee on Gaming  
Testimony of Brian Sells – Vice President – Chief Marketing Officer  
March 17, 2021

Good afternoon Chairman Schuring, Vice-Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Committee.

My name is Brian Sells, Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer of the Cincinnati Bengals. I am here to share our position on the potential legalization of sports betting in Ohio and we appreciate the opportunity this afternoon.

You have already heard from many different organizations since the Select Committee began its work, including from our fellow professional sports leagues last week. And as you might expect, there are many differing views on how sports betting should be implemented in Ohio.

But first let me reinforce why you should move forward.

Sports betting is already occurring in the illegal, unregulated market. We recognize that we will all be better off if this activity moved into a regulated market where we can better deal with any potential attempt to influence game integrity.

Sports betting legislation has already been passed in more than 20 states<sup>1</sup> and the District of Columbia. And as Ted mentioned, with Pennsylvania, Indiana, West Virginia and Michigan all allowing sports betting today, not only is Ohio missing out to the illegal betting market, but to almost all of our border states as well.

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<sup>1</sup> South Dakota's legislature last week passed LSB legislation for the city of Deadwood, however the legislation has yet to be signed by the Governor.

So, from a state revenue perspective, as well as to meet the proven demand of our fellow Ohioans, we believe it is important for you to move forward now.

This brings us back to the immediate question on the table - "how" do you move forward.

We believe the best way to move forward is to create a robust framework for legalized sports betting that contains strong protections for consumers, ensures broad access for the citizens of Ohio and protects the integrity of professional sports.

We believe to do this there are core standards for sports betting that we would ask this committee and the Ohio Senate to consider:

First, create a regulated sports betting environment with substantial consumer protections. These protections would include age limitations, a prohibition of insider sports betting, and the restriction of risky prop bets.

We think this is best accomplished through the existing Casino Control Commission. They have the experience and tools already in place to monitor and regulate the players in this arena.

Second, we believe that access to official league data is imperative to the accurate and appropriate settling of wagers and is an important consumer and market protection.

And thirdly, it is important to require the sharing of information between leagues, operators and law enforcement so we can work together to ensure the integrity of our game.

The additional information submitted by the Browns, Bengals and the NFL discusses all of these issues in greater depth. I am sure there will be other good ideas that come from your study and we stand ready to share our perspective as you move forward.

Ensuring that Ohioans have access to safe and secure sports betting is an important priority and needs to be considered as you begin to draft your legislation. For this reason, mobile access is key to moving Ohioans from the illegal market to the legal market.

Current technology makes this an easier prospect today and we can learn from the other states that have already adopted sports betting.

Finally, as this committee and the Ohio legislature considers sports betting legislation, it should include language to protect the interests of Ohio's professional sports franchises.

Casinos and racinos already play an important role in the gambling environment in Ohio and obviously represent the core to sports betting in Ohio.

However, market access for Ohio's professional teams is vitally important to our ability to compete with others in our respective leagues. So, in addition to providing market access to the 11 casinos and racinos, we believe the local professional sports teams should be provided market access as well.

How this access is defined is up to debate, but at a minimum, having access to a mobile skin seems appropriate. Such a provision would recognize the significant economic investment the NFL, Bengals, Browns and other professional teams have made in the state of Ohio. Our investments result in supporting thousands of full time and seasonal jobs, the significant tax revenue that we produce, as well as the tangible and intangible charitable support we drive to our communities.

Including us in the deployment of legal sports betting will ensure we can help to drive the conversion of the illegal market to the legal, regulated marketplace. We would look forward to continuing the discussion of market access with members of this Committee as you move forward with your consideration.

Finally, to reinforce something Ted mentioned, while we certainly do not want to rush this process, the State of Ohio and its professional teams have fallen behind with regard to legalizing sports betting. Virtually all of our neighboring states have moved forward and have successfully met the demand in their state and tapped into activity that should benefit the citizens and taxpayers of Ohio.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to speak today and we look forward to working with you and other legislators as we decide the future of sports betting in Ohio.