



Written Testimony of LeagueApps
Member of PLAY Sports Coalition
Before the Ohio Senate Select Committee on Gaming
June 9, 2021

Chair Schuring, Vice Chair Manning, Members of the Committee:

With more than 50 years of combined experience in building community through local youth sports programming, we, the leadership of LeagueApps, respectfully submit the following written testimony for Ohio Senate Bill 176 and the historic creation of a grant fund from legalized mobile sports betting tax revenue allocated for advancing youth sports programs in underserved communities.

At LeagueApps, we are committed to building technology and community to support local sports organizations, including the more than 70 Ohio-based partners we work with. In providing the capacity building for our partners creating amazing life-building experiences for more than 10 million young people, our company's broader vision is to lead the creation of an equitable youth sports culture that makes the world a better place for all.

We also are the proud co-founder of the PLAY Sports Coalition, which stands for Promoting Local and Youth Sports. The Coalition consists of more than 4,000 community and national sports organizations and leaders united in support of our country's young athletes, working families, coaches and volunteers, particularly those serving low income communities through sports-based youth development (SBYD) programs. Our Coalition mission is to ensure that youth and local sports survive and thrive coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These SBYD programs and their dynamic leaders serve a vital need in urban areas, including across Ohio's 88 counties, to provide sports as a platform and experience to build positive healthy outcomes, including social emotional learning, pro-social relationship skills and better academic performance.

The COVID-19 pandemic proved how important sport is for the physical and mental well-being and development of children and families.

A [recent survey](#) from the Youth Sports Collaborative Network showed that the pandemic's impact on SBYDs, including those serving Ohio's youth, had a dramatic impact on young

people's activities. The participating youth sports programs serving low-income communities reported that 84% of their registered youth have not regularly participated in their programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When combined with the Aspen Institute Project Play report released in March 2021 - [State of Play Central Ohio](#) - that details the immediate need for youth sports programs and additional investment to fund these programs, it is clear now is the pivotal moment for Ohio to action efforts to grow quality access to sports, physical activity and outdoor recreation for all children, regardless of race, gender, income or ability.

The Aspen Institute report found that financial barriers prevent 20% of surveyed Central Ohio youth from playing sports more often. Inequities in youth sport access and participation throughout Central Ohio reflect disparities across race and ethnicity and reinforce the importance of how sports-related programs serve in building thriving and healthy communities.

This drastic drop in urban youth participation, along with the multitude of societal and program funding challenges 2020 brought to our country, validates two critical opportunities to ensure the industry survives and thrives beyond the pandemic: 1) the need for mission-driven organizations like LeagueApps to enact programs supporting SBYDs at the infrastructure level and 2) the creation of a governed framework for prioritizing equity in access to youth and local sports programs.

Advancing the LeagueApps mission through a belief that sports are a unifying force for good is embodied through the creation of [FundPlay](#). This program provides technology, training and support to ensure every child is able to play, no matter their circumstances. Through FundPlay grant recipient organizations, including those serving Ohio such as America SCORES Cleveland, Recess Cleveland and RallyCap Sports programs, LeagueApps has been able to impact more than 230,000 youth in underserved communities in just the past few years.

Now is the time for you - the State of Ohio leadership - to show its commitment to successful youth and community development by allocating a portion of mobile sports betting revenue to funding grants for youth sports programs serving under-resourced areas and families.

It is an outcome that will establish Ohio as a model for eliminating societal gaps through infrastructure investments for equality, innovation, community, and service to young people.

At LeagueApps, we'll continue to play our role in ensuring the youth and local sports industry builds a better culture. The creation of a grant fund from legalized mobile sports betting tax revenue allocated for advancing youth sports programs in underserved areas through Senate Bill 176 will allow you to play yours and show us all how the power of equitable sport will bridge divides and build communities all Ohioans are proud to call home.

Sincerely,

Brian Litvack
Co-founder and CEO, LeagueApps

Jeremy Goldberg
President, LeagueApps

Benita Fitzgerald Mosley, OLY
1984 Olympic Gold Medalist
Head of Community & Impact, LeagueApps
President, FundPlay