

Written Testimony of America SCORES Cleveland
Member of PLAY Sports Coalition
Ohio Senate Select Committee on Gaming
June 10, 2021

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding Ohio's pending sports betting bill, Senate Bill 176. My name is Debi Pence-Meyenberg and I am the Executive Director of America SCORES Cleveland ("SCORES"). America SCORES is a sports-based youth development program that provides soccer, poetry and service-learning programming for over 1,000 Cleveland youth each year, in partnership with schools and community organizations. We are proud to partner with organizations like the PLAY Sports Coalition, the Lindy Infante Foundation, and LeagueApps to help make a difference in the lives of children through physical activity and creative expression.

At SCORES, we are passionate about helping Cleveland youth lead healthy lives. As Ohio considers the legalization of mobile sports betting, we respectfully request that the legislature consider allocating a share of tax revenue toward youth sports programs in communities that need it most. Ohio has the chance to be a leader on this issue and set a model for other states as they authorize sports betting.

The power of sport – and particularly youth sport programs – cannot be overstated. Children who participate in sports and physical activity experience physical, mental, social and emotional, and academic benefits. At SCORES, we are particularly focused on youth development, literacy, and improved educational outcomes in underserved communities. We suggest the Committee consider earmarking 5% of revenue derived from mobile sports betting for youth sports programs. These funds could help make a huge difference for so many local families.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input. We hope to continue this conversation to help make a difference in the lives of Ohio families and communities.