



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

November 9, 2021

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee - thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 147. My name is Woody Fitton and I have the pleasure as serving as the President/CEO of the Great Miami Valley YMCA. I am here today testifying on behalf of the Ohio Alliance of YMCAs, of which I am the current chair. The Ohio Alliance is a nonprofit organization that represents the 162 YMCAs throughout the state. We are a grassroots driven and governed organization that advocates and educates on behalf of the YMCAs and their mission.

Ohio YMCAs support SB 147, which would repeal the sales tax on nonprofit fitness memberships. Until the mid-1990s, Ohio YMCAs were tax exempt in all aspects of their mission work until the legislature imposed this tax.

Ohio YMCAs ask to return to full tax exempt status, as they should be as 501(c)(3)s. Taxing memberships is unjust and runs contrary to our organizations' charitable nonprofit purpose.

A YMCA should not have to tax a member, such as a youth that comes after school to a safe place to participate in healthy activities; or a senior citizen who comes to the Y to connect with others and engage in programs that help them stay healthy and active.

YMCAs are charitable, nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations that are dedicated to youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Every day we take on challenges that will shape our communities' futures - challenges like the academic achievement gap, chronic disease, and social isolation. In the pandemic, YMCAs stepped into the fray to provide even more community supports such as emergency shelter for first responders, child care for first responders' children, and feeding programs.

Like nonprofit hospitals, YMCAs provide immense community benefit. In 2019:

- YMCAs contributed over \$23 million in financial assistance to those who could not otherwise afford a membership.
- Over 29,000 volunteers donated over \$2.8 million worth of time.

YMCAs are not taxed on other programs and services, such as summer camp and fitness classes, only memberships.

The dollars YMCAs collect from members and remit for sales tax could be used to provide more financial assistance to those who cannot afford to be a member and participate in programs, or allow YMCAs to lower their rates.



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With dramatically increased social isolation and healthcare costs, Ohioans need incentives to get connected back to community and be healthy. Let us be that incentive. With your support we can continue to do what we do best - change lives and continue to be a positive impact on our communities. We are so much more than a fitness center or a gym. We are a truly a cause.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for your continued support of Ohio YMCAs. We much appreciate your support in the last budget process. We look forward to continuing to work together to find ways to support Ohio's communities. I would be happy to answer any questions.