

Jo Rodgers – Testimony

Senate Resolution 342

Senate Finance Committee

February 27, 2018

Thank you, Chairman Coley, committee members. And thank you to Senator Kunze, Senator

Bacon, and Senator Tavares for sponsoring this resolution. I am speaking to you today on

behalf of the Save The Crew movement.

The Columbus Foundation describes the Spirit of Columbus as follows: “More than just the

name of a plane that made history, The Spirit of Columbus is what distinguishes and inspires us

today. From the arts to business, from restaurants to neighborhoods, from Sunday to game day,

The Spirit of Columbus fuels and defines us today more than ever.”

The Columbus Crew is a big part of the Spirit of Columbus. Our game days, whether they take

place at Mapfre Stadium, or at one of the many soccer supporting pubs or restaurants

throughout the state, or even in the homes of the many Crew fans, are a time where soccer

lovers come together to cheer on our team. Family is the word that many Crew fans use when

they describe the people they have come to know through supporting the Crew, and these

bonds make our community stronger. And of course, cheering on a team is just plain fun.

But having a professional soccer team in our city and our state goes beyond the fun and

passion of game day. As a part of our efforts to keep the Crew in Columbus, SaveTheCrew has

been honored to gain the support of over 300 businesses in our community. These businesses

range in size from national companies like Safelight Auto Glass, DSW, White Castle, Donato’s,

and covermymeds to midsize and small companies. They’ve contributed to the movement

through sponsorship, fiscal and in-kind donations, and help spreading our message. They did

this because they see the value to our city and our state that the Columbus Crew brings. These

companies know that a community that offers its residents many social options is a community

that draws the best and the brightest. And the people drawn to these vibrant communities make

their workforces, and their communities, stronger. Having the Crew in our State makes Ohio

that much more attractive to any company who is wanting to move or expand and continues to

fuel the businesses already here.

Professional soccer also has a strong presence in our communities in the form of youth player

development. The Crew has their own youth teams that offer children of all ages throughout our

state the opportunity to learn and play this game. Hundreds of children participate on the Crew

teams and enjoy excellent coaching as well as the opportunity to interact with the players on the

Columbus Crew team. And even children who play for leagues not affiliated with the Crew have

the opportunity to attend Crew sponsored camps, interact with Crew players, and to see their

sport played at the highest level. Losing this resource would be a blow to youth soccer

throughout the state and deprive many of our youth of the teams where they have always

played.

Losing the Crew and losing the passion of a Columbus Crew game day would certainly be a

loss felt by soccer lovers throughout the state. But that loss would resonate beyond just soccer

fans. It would be felt by our soccer playing youth as well as our business community. The Spirit

of Columbus would still be alive and kicking, but it would be less robust than it is today. And

that is why we ask that you support this resolution to help us keep The Columbus Crew in

Columbus, Ohio. Thank you.