

Ohio Senate Ways & Means Committee

Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 4

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Chair Blessing, Vice Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Substitute Senate Bill 4, which would modify the Film & Theater Tax Credit. I am providing proponent testimony on behalf of Downtown Cleveland Alliance, a nonprofit corporation dedicated to attracting residents, jobs, visitors, business and investment to Cleveland's central district. Our work encompasses improving Downtown Cleveland from the sidewalk to the skyline and everything in between. We steward public improvements and private development in Cleveland's center city. In addition, we manage the Downtown Cleveland Improvement District, through which property owners have committed over \$60 million over the last 16 years. This investment creates an environment that is clean, safe, and welcoming; business and resident friendly; and investment ready.

Cleveland is home to Playhouse Square, the largest performing arts district outside of New York City, where Broadway productions are often tested or launched in Cleveland. One such example is *The Lion King*, which launched its first run after the pandemic in Downtown Cleveland. Playhouse Square attracts over 1 million visitors each year, amounting to over \$359 million in economic impact each year. Cleveland is also home to the largest annual film festival in the state of Ohio, the Cleveland International Film Festival (CIFF). CIFF features a wide range of motion picture films that are produced locally and internationally, bringing in tens of thousands of visitors annually from around the world. In the previous two years, Ohio has seen nearly \$133.6 million of out of state investment flow into northeast Ohio to spend on motion picture productions. Additionally, due to productions typically requiring various settings, this credit also has incentivized productions to conduct business in rural areas of Ohio that may be unlikely to otherwise see this level of investment, as this credit is not specific to any region.

Film and theater have played a historic and integral role in Cleveland's culture, appeal, and economic vitality. As stewards of the economic improvement of Downtown Cleveland, it is our position that the Film & Theater Credit plays a critical role in attracting investment to our central business district. As small and locally owned Downtown restaurants, hotels, and retail storefronts recuperate from losses during the pandemic and adjust to the change in foot traffic due to hybrid work schedules, it is detrimental that we as a region and state incentivize the creation of jobs and support policies that attract residents and visitors.

On behalf of Downtown Cleveland Alliance, we respectfully urge passage of Substitute Senate Bill 4. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Commented [DJ1]: wonder if "beta tested" may confuse people who aren't familiar with the term. Maybe just "tested"