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Hon. Shannon G. Hardin
President
Columbus City Council
90 West Broad St.
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Mr. Hardin:

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed ticket tax which City Council has under considerations. As a trustee of and donor to a number of arts organizations in Columbus, I know first hand how important the extra revenue can be for those organizations. Each of them are devoting more and more time to community outreach, while rising operating costs continue to outpace their ability to raise individual charitable contributions.

Columbus is a great and growing city with a vibrant arts community. However, the City and other public sources provide a significantly lower percentage of revenue for that arts community than the national average. Although the Greater Columbus Arts Council has done a magnificent job in administering bed tax funds, charitable organizations like COSI, the Symphony, Ballet Met, and the Museum all face major economic problems which their competitors in other cities do not.

Unlike our friends in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and surrounding cities, our local arts organizations are not well endowed. They do not have huge portolios throwing off investment funds to cover their daily programs. For the Columbus Museum of Art, for example, we are seeking new funding to keep admission free on Sundays. Thousands of families have taken advantage of that program in the past, and we hope to sustain (and even expand upon) that accessibility in the future. Unfortunately, the Museum cannot afford to do that without additional public funding.

As a user fee, the ticket tax is a fundamentally fair method to fund these organizations. Many of the opponents of the proposal are for-profit companies which have thrived because of the strong community which the arts organizations have built. People want to live in Columbus in part because of its arts and cultural infrastructure, and thus those for-profits have an audience. If the charitable venues for music, art, and theatre were to receive a financial shot in the arm, the for-profits would also be beneficiaries of a more stabilized arts infrastructure.

I call upon you and the members of City Council to consider the ticket tax proposal seriously and vote in favor of strengthening the reputation of Columbus as a great city in which to live, work, and be inspired by the arts.

Very truly yours,

John C. Beeler

cc: City Council Members
Mr. Michael S. Brown
Ms. Nannette Maciejunes

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