



## Cuyahoga County

April 28, 2025

Honorable Rob McColley  
President, Ohio Senate  
1 Capitol Square, Second Floor 201  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Honorable Nickie J. Antonio  
Minority Leader, Ohio Senate  
1 Capitol Square, Third Floor SH-303  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Senate President McColley and Minority Leader Antonio,

The Cleveland Browns are an institution in Northeast Ohio and Browns fans have been watching football on the Cleveland lakefront since the team's first season in 1946. I have heard from Northeast Ohioans and Browns fans from around the world and the message is clear: they want the Cleveland Browns to stay in downtown Cleveland.

As Cuyahoga County Executive, I am requesting \$350 million in the State operating budget for the transformation and renovation of Huntington Bank Field, the current home of the Browns, on Cleveland's downtown lakefront. As the Senate deliberates on the operating budget and considers the unprecedented request by Haslam Sports Group (HSG) for \$600 million in bonds for the new domed stadium proposal, you need to know there is a better, and less expensive option for the stadium.

This allocation, in parity with what has been requested by the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners for their stadium renovation, would support the transformation of the downtown lakefront and current Cleveland Browns stadium and will cost the State of Ohio \$250 million less than the domed proposal. Fair is fair. The two NFL teams in Ohio, both in the AFC North Division, should receive an equal sum for stadiums that are comparable in age, structure, and location on downtown waterfronts.

This downtown transformation proposal aligns with the plan that Haslam Sports Group shared with me in 2023 when I took office as Cuyahoga County Executive. The County, the City of Cleveland, and HSG advocated for this proposal together as a part of Cleveland's lakefront plan to leverage assets like the stadium, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the Great Lakes Science Center to build a world-class lakefront experience for residents and visitors. The transformation proposal builds on the hundreds of millions of dollars invested by private and public partners, including the State of Ohio, into Downtown Cleveland that could be undermined by a Brook Park stadium.

This proposal stands in stark contrast to the \$600 million in bonds requested from the State of Ohio and \$600 million in bonds requested from Cuyahoga County by HSG for the domed stadium proposal that will create an unacceptable amount of risk for taxpayers in Cuyahoga County and in Ohio. In Cuyahoga County, we remain concerned about the risks associated with unrealistic event projections and inflated revenue estimates, the potential dissolution of state income tax as a funding stream for state bond repayment, aggressive assumptions for parking and admissions taxes, an increase in the bed tax directed to a single project, and the

creation of an unprecedented county-wide car rental tax on our residents.

We continue to have unanswered questions regarding ongoing capital repair funds, facility ownership, unattributable infrastructure costs, and impacts on municipal budgets, and public safety and healthcare response times in Brook Park and surrounding communities. Given these questions and concerns, I have made my position clear that Cuyahoga County taxpayers should not bear the risk for the Brook Park project.

Instead, I ask you to join me in support of the downtown Cleveland transformation plan first proposed by Haslam Sports Group, created in conjunction with the City of Cleveland. Let's do right by taxpayers in Cuyahoga County and Ohio by re-investing in a transformational downtown plan. All for half the price tag. Thank you for your consideration. I am eager to share more information and materials regarding the downtown transformation plan at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Ronayne", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chris Ronayne  
Cuyahoga County Executive

CC: Members of the Ohio Senate