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Greater Cleveland Partnership reluctant to endorse Cuyahoga County's health and human services levy

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GCP says it wants 'to gather additional information and data on the tax increase proposal and its impact.'

The Greater Cleveland Partnership ([GCP](#)) has endorsed Cuyahoga County health and human services levies in the past, but the recent proposed increase has the organization holding back from giving the ballot issue its full support.

GCP announced on Wednesday, Dec. 18, that it intends "to gather additional information and data on the tax increase proposal and its impact." The statement is in line with the group's [recent statements](#) that it will take a hard look at any new tax expenditures in the region.

Cuyahoga County Council this month [voted 9-2](#) to place a 4.7-mill levy, which includes a 0.8-mill increase, on the March 2020 ballot. If passed, the levy would go into effect in 2021 and raise an additional \$35 million annually. The increase would mean an extra \$41 in taxes a year per \$100,000 of house value.

According to a statement from GCP, the group is concerned that residents are facing too many potential tax increases in the next year. It's asking the county government to provide more detail on how the additional money will be used and whether those funds are being used efficiently.

"Our concern on this levy increase is the lack of detailed information provided to date, the brief window the business community and other

key stakeholders have for a significant review and an overall lack of concrete metrics to measure and report on results," said GCP president and CEO Joe Roman.

County spokesperson Eliza Wing pushed back on the GCP statement, pointing out that the [office of Innovation and Performance](#), headed by Catherine Tkachyk, does employ benchmarking and metrics for the county in quarterly reports.

"We measure well over 100 metrics and track against benchmark counties in the report. We presented this report ... and our approach to tracking and continuous improvement to GCP staff last Tuesday," Wing said.

John Corlett, president and executive director of the [Center for Community Solutions](#), added, "If Ohio was like some other states where 100% of the child welfare costs are paid by the state, we probably would not be talking about an increase in the levy. It is what really has been the difference in this past six years since the last levy increase."

The levy increase would help fund programs like First Year Cleveland to reduce the rate of infant mortality, universal pre-K and Say Yes to Education, a program that pays for college for high school graduates. All are programs to combat poverty, Wing said.

GCP said its members are working "to actively engage with the county on the structure of the health and human services levy," but the group remains firm in stating it is "raising the bar for support" for future tax levy increases.

Inline Play

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