

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 21, 2020

Robert D. Manfred Jr.
Commissioner of Baseball
Major League Baseball
245 Park Avenue, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10167

Commissioner Manfred:

We write with great concern about the future of professional baseball in the Mahoning Valley. In November 2019, a New York Times report revealed a list of 42 teams that Major League Baseball (MLB) had identified for contraction from its club-affiliated system as part of its negotiations over an updated agreement with Minor League Baseball (MiLB). We were concerned to find the Mahoning Valley Scrappers on that list. Baseball belongs in the Mahoning Valley, and we urge both you and MiLB to work in good faith with owners of the Scrappers to reach a productive solution that preserves the rich tradition of baseball in the Mahoning Valley.

The Scrappers are a focal point of summer entertainment in their community. From June to September each year, they provide fans with affordable family entertainment, and a connection to America's pastime – and the Cleveland Indians – right in their hometown. For fans who don't have the time or the income to drive over an hour each way to Cleveland or Pittsburgh for MLB games, the Scrappers may be the only opportunity to enjoy a night out at the ballpark.

The Scrappers also make a real contribution to the region's economy. The team employs around 200 people and attracts over 200,000 visitors to the ballpark each year. These visitors aren't just coming to the ballpark for the 38 Scrappers home games. Rather, the ballpark is host to 200 total events each year, including high school and college baseball games, concerts, as well as other community and charitable events. All of these events, along with the contributions they make to the local economy through ticket sales, food, and merchandise, would not be possible without the preservation of professional baseball in the Mahoning Valley.

Further, MLB has cited the need for improved stadium conditions and player travel accommodations as a reason for eliminating these 42 MiLB teams. If stadium improvements and accommodations were truly a reason for MiLB targeting these teams, the Scrappers should not be included on that list. In the last two years alone, the Scrappers have invested over \$2 million into their ballpark, Eastwood Field. These investments include a new field surface, drains around the warning track, a new weight room for players, common space connected to the clubhouse, and new state-of-the-art stadium lighting. All of these investments show a commitment to offering a great professional baseball product and stronger player health and wellness. Yet, all of

that investment could go to waste if there is no future for Eastwood Field and the Mahoning Valley Scrappers.

Our hope is that all parties involved take seriously their roles not just as representatives of their respective organizations, but as contributors to this Ohio community. As you continue negotiations with MiLB owners on this month, you have an opportunity to send a message to baseball fans in the Mahoning Valley – as well as in Akron, Toledo, Lake County, Dayton, and Columbus – that you value their support. We urge you take that opportunity by doing all that is possible to ensure a path forward for the Mahoning Valley Scrappers and to preserve America's pastime in Northeast Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Rob Portman
United States Senator