



HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

STATE OF MICHIGAN

Appropriations Requests for Legislatively Directed Spending Items

1. The sponsoring representative's first name:
David
2. The sponsoring representative's last name:
Martin
3. The cosponsoring representatives' names. All cosponsors must be listed. If none, please type 'n/a.' A signed letter from the sponsor approving the co-sponsorship and a signed letter from the member wishing to co-sponsor are required. Attach letters at question #9 below.
n/a
4. Name of the entity that the spending item is intended for:
Flint Firebirds Foundation
5. Physical address of the entity that the spending item is intended for:
3501 Lapeer Rd., Flint, MI 48503
6. If there is not a specific recipient, the intended location of the project or activity:
3501 Lapeer Rd., Flint, MI 48503
7. Name of the representative and the district number where the legislatively directed spending item is located:
Rep. Cynthia Neeley - District 70
8. Purpose of the legislatively directed spending item. Please include how it provides a public benefit and why it is an appropriate use of taxpayer funding. Please also demonstrate that the item does not violate Article IV, S 30 of the Michigan Constitution.
The Flint Firebirds Foundation in conjunction with Dort Financial Center, is seeking a one-time appropriation to continue to provide a welcoming, accessible and functional space for families participating in events at Genesee County's largest public event center.

Many of the families served include those with children (families with strollers) and seniors who have mobility challenges. The updates needed at the facility are not a luxury but a necessity to continue serving the community. This would include curbs, parking lot,

handicap accessible ramps and entrances to the arena. These improvements will dramatically improve the safety of the public access areas at the center, improve the curb appeal of the facility, increase opportunities to reach kids, seniors and families and provide safer space for community events.

Since its opening in 1969, the Dort Financial Center has been a vital public gathering place for generations of Flint and Genesee County residents. This investment would enable a safe and accessible environment to continue to be provided for families and residents at Genesee County's largest public event center.

9. Attach documents here if needed:

Attachments added to the end of this file.

10. The amount of state funding requested for the legislatively directed spending item.

2500000

11. Has the legislatively directed spending item previously received any of the following types of funding? Check all that apply.

["None"]

12. Please select one of the following groups that describes the entity requesting the legislatively directed spending item:

Non-profit organization

13. For a non-profit organization, has the organization been operating within Michigan for the preceding 36 months?

Yes

14. For a non-profit organization, has the entity had a physical office within Michigan for the preceding 12 months?

Yes

15. For a non-profit organization, does the organization have a board of directors?

Yes

16. For a non-profit organization, list all the active members on the organization's board of directors and any other officers. If this question is not applicable, please type 'n/a.'

Board Members: President: Monika Kronenberger; Treasurer: Eve Roe; Secretary: Jeremy Torrey; Directors: Monika Kronenberger, Eve Roe and Jeremy Torrey

17. "I certify that neither the sponsoring representative nor the sponsoring representative's staff or immediate family has a direct or indirect pecuniary interest in the legislatively directed spending item."

Yes, this is correct

18. Anticipated start and end dates for the legislatively directed spending item:

Summer 2026

19. "I hereby certify that all information provided in this request is true and accurate."

Yes



The Flint Firebirds Foundation in conjunction with Dort Financial Center seeks to continue providing a welcoming, accessible and functional space for children and families participating at the center. For many of the families served, including those with children (families with strollers) and seniors who have mobility challenges—these updates are not a luxury but a necessity. A safe and accessible environment is foundational, ensuring every person regardless of ability can fully engage in various events without barriers and community can gather with confidence and care.

The Flint Firebirds Foundation, established in September 2015, is the charitable arm of the Flint Firebirds and operates out of the Dort Financial Center. With a mission rooted in supporting youth hockey and broader youth initiatives, the foundation focuses its efforts in Genesee and Lapeer Counties. Its purpose is to foster participation and growth in youth sports and educational activities by administering funds, acquiring resources, and creating opportunities for young athletes to thrive—on and off the ice. Since its founding, the Flint Firebirds Foundation has proudly raised nearly \$1.5 million to support its mission and make a lasting impact in the community.

ABOUT THE DORT FINANCIAL CENTER

The Dort Financial Center has proudly served the Flint community and greater Mid-Michigan region for over 55 years. With a capacity of 6,300 and more than 50,000 square feet of flexible event space, it stands as the largest indoor event and entertainment venue in Genesee County. It is also the proud home of the Flint Firebirds, one of only three Ontario Hockey League (OHL) teams based in the United States—the premier development league for the NHL.

Since 2015, as part of a dedicated effort to transform the historic venue into a vibrant, community-focused gathering space, the Dort Financial Center has undergone over \$8 million in capital improvements. These upgrades have prioritized enhancing the guest experience, increasing operational efficiency, and meeting league standards required to host an OHL franchise.

FLINT FIREBIRDS & DORT FINANCIAL CENTER COMMUNITY ECONOMIC IMPACT

Yearly direct economic impact to
Flint, Genesee County, and the
surrounding areas = appr.

\$9 MILLION/YEAR

Indirect
economic impact =

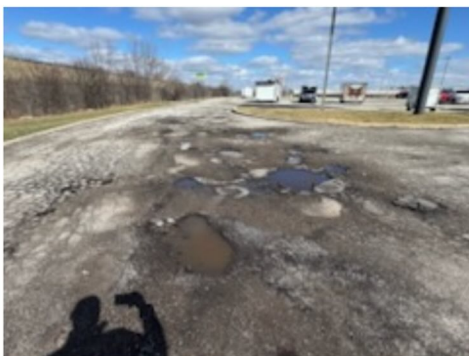
<\$15 MILLION/YEAR

IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Moving forward, the Dort Financial Center is planning a major facility improvement project focused on renovating the parking lot, curbs, handicap-accessible ramps, and main arena entrances. These essential upgrades will not only enhance the overall fan experience and dramatically improve the facility's curb appeal, but also ensure greater accessibility for all visitors.

To support this effort, we are seeking a one-time state appropriation of \$2.5 million.

This investment will significantly strengthen the Dort Financial Center's ability to attract and host a wider variety of events—ranging from sporting events and concerts to community gatherings—while providing a positive economic ripple effect throughout the Flint area. A revitalized, modernized event center will draw developers, boost local business, support job creation, and position Flint as a destination for world-class entertainment. More than just a venue, the Dort Financial Center is a key driver of civic pride, economic activity, and community connection for the region and the state of Michigan.



ABOUT THE DORT FINANCIAL CENTER

The Dort Financial Center has proudly served Mid-Michigan and the community of Flint for over 55 years. With a 6,300-person capacity and over 50,000 square feet of event space, it is the largest indoor event and entertainment venue in Genesee County. Dort Financial Center is home to one of only three OHL teams (Flint Firebirds), the premier developmental league for the NHL, in the U.S.

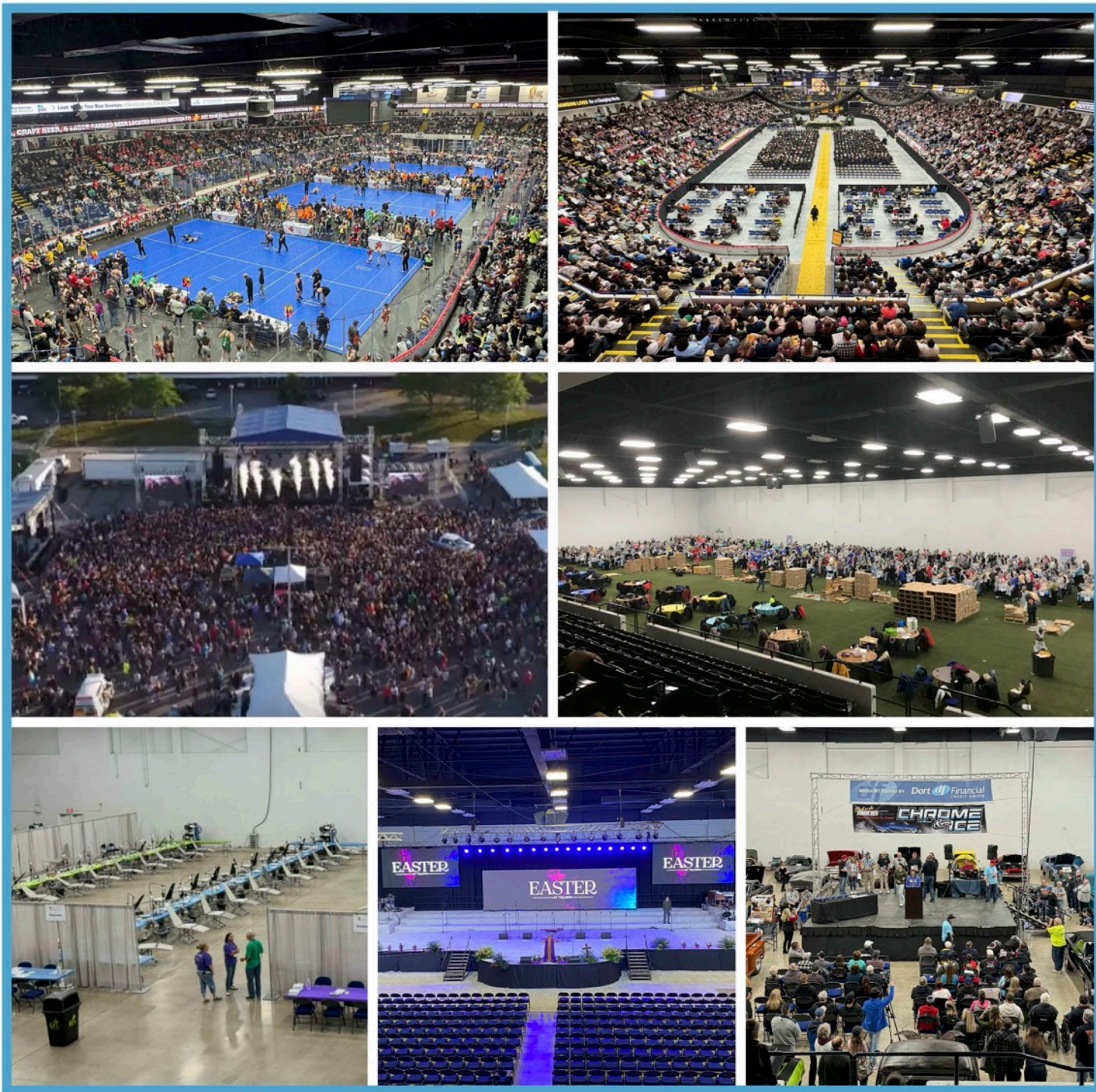
The Flint Firebirds have been attracting fans from all over the United States and Canada for nearly 10 years. In addition to hockey and other sporting events, the facility is utilized for many of the area's most recognizable, popular and impactful events. Milestones are celebrated in both sport and academics; memories are created, and funds are raised for many charities and nonprofits. Annual events include high school and college commencements, the Shrine Circus, Back to the Bricks Chrome and Ice car show, Big Brothers Big Sisters Motorcycle Ice Race, trade shows, youth sporting events, expos and more.



Since 2015, in an effort to revitalize the historic facility into a public gathering space the community could be proud of, the Dort Financial Center has seen major capital improvements and upgrades each year totaling over \$8 million. Upgrades have been focused on enhancing the customer experience, improving operational efficiency and meeting league requirements necessary to house an OHL team.

Projects include building a first-class locker room for the Firebirds and visiting team, renovations to both the main arena and secondary arenas event space and restrooms, energy-efficient LED lighting upgrades throughout the building and parking lot, installation of new high efficiency heating and hot water boilers.

In 2020, while the facility was shut down due to COVID, the Dort Financial Center underwent a major round of renovations which included updated seating in the main arena, as well as LED ribbon panels that would encircle the entire arena and lobby, both acquired from the Palace of Auburn Hills before demolition of the arena.



NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVICED

The Dort Financial Center hosts a minimum of 34 Firebirds games each season, entertaining over 100,000 fans. Beyond that, the arena accommodates an additional 60 to 80 events annually, welcoming another 75,000 to 150,000 attendees. Event organizers include but are not limited to non-profits, charities, universities, colleges, high schools, business owners and independent promoters.

Dort Financial Center has seen strong upward trajectory during the 24/25 season. The facility is one of only a limited number of venues across the country to host both Presidential Nominees for the 2024 Election. Currently, 2025-2026 is forecasted to be on par with year over year activity.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Dort Financial Center is currently privately owned and operated and has remained sustainable with ownership investing private equity into the facility, upwards of \$8 million in capital improvements and several million in operational losses.

Through continued growth of the Firebirds fan base and Dort Financial Center programming, the entities are approaching the annual operating breakeven point. Additional capital will be required in the near and long term to maintain the facility.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Dort Financial Center and Flint Firebirds will provide a yearly direct economic impact to Flint and Genesee County of approximately \$9 million per year and an indirect economic impact of over \$15 million per year.

Funding Request Total: \$2.5 million

East and West Parking Lot Renovation
Total Concrete Curb/Walkway

IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Moving forward, Dort Financial Center is planning an extensive renovation project to the facilities parking lot, curbs, handicap accessible ramps and arena entrance. These repairs will dramatically improve both the curb appeal of the facility, the fan experience and provide better accessibility to those in need.





A Division of the Flint & Genesee Group

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Flint, MI 48502
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ExploreFlintandGenesee.org

April 22, 2025

As Executive Director of Explore Flint & Genesee, I am proud to express our strong support for the Flint Firebirds Foundation's 2025 appropriations request as they, in conjunction with the Dort Financial Center, are a cornerstone of our community's cultural, economic, and civic life.

Since its opening in 1969, the Dort Financial Center has been a vital public gathering place for generations of Flint and Genesee County residents. From hosting high school and college graduation ceremonies to welcoming world-class entertainment and family-friendly events, the arena has consistently provided memorable experiences for our community.

The Flint Firebirds Foundation in conjunction with Dort Financial Center seeks to continue providing a welcoming, accessible and functional space for children and families participating at the center. The facility's role as the home of the Flint Firebirds has significantly contributed to our local economy.


The Firebirds' games attract fans from across the region, filling hotels and restaurants, and enhancing Flint's reputation as a vibrant sports destination. Beyond hockey, the arena has hosted major events, including the recent Claressa Shields boxing match, which drew national attention and showcased Flint's rich sporting heritage.

Moreover, the Dort Financial Center has served as a crucial venue for civic engagement, having hosted events for both major presidential candidates during the most recent election cycle.

Explore Flint & Genesee Convention and Visitors Bureau fully supports initiatives aimed at enhancing the visitor experience at the Dort Financial Center through the Flint Firebirds Foundation. Investments in the arena not only improve the quality and safety of the public events hosted but also stimulate economic growth, attract tourism, and reinforce community pride.

We look forward to continued collaboration to ensure the Dort Financial Center remains a dynamic and welcoming venue for all, and strongly support the Flint Firebirds Foundation's 2025 appropriations request.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Amari Steward

Executive Director
Explore Flint & Genesee
asteward@flintandgenesee.org