Chair Manning, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Minority Member Cafaro, Members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce, and Labor Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Cara Dingus Brook and I am the President & CEO at the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio. For the past 17 years, the Foundation has been creating opportunities for Appalachian Ohio’s citizens and communities by inspiring and supporting philanthropy. With over 150 funds under our management, we are working with thousands of citizens to make a difference across Appalachian Ohio every day.

As you well know, our region battles generational poverty. One symptom of this condition can be diminished expectations among our citizens for what our region and citizens can achieve.

Because of this, a central tenet of our Foundation's approach has been to encourage the citizens of our region, especially our youngest ones, to believe in themselves and in their ability to accomplish anything.

We have done this by sharing stories of success, especially stories that have shown how one person, committed to service for the greater good, can make a lasting difference.

In Nelsonville, where the Foundation’s headquarters are based, we are appreciative of the State’s investments in Route 33. And we are here today because we are excited about the good to come from naming the bypass after State Senator C. Stanley Mechem, a citizen of our region who dedicated many years of his life to create opportunities for others.

One thing we have learned as a foundation for our region is that surprisingly simple investments and actions can make huge differences, reverberating across generations in their impact. We would suggest that the naming of a
portion of Route 33 in honor of State Senator Mechem is one of these investment opportunities.

Your action with this proposal will have the consequence of encouraging many citizens to consider ways they can make a difference, and that will have a far-reaching and positive impact.

We thank you for your time and consideration.