



Chairwoman Anielski, Vice-Chair Hambley, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee; thank you for providing me the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 229.

Growing up, Charles' father was a laborer, which meant, that Charles too would work countless hours with his dad, helping him develop his physical and mental strength from a young age. During his football career, he was targeted both on and off the field. On the field, he was targeted by the opposing teams which led to serious injuries and the end of his football career during a Thanksgiving game in 1906. In 1905, during a game against Toledo, Follis was subject to racial slurs that were hurled by the Toledo fans until Toledo's captain urged them to stop. Off the field, Follis was still targeted as he was denied entry to restaurants with his teammates because of the color of his skin. One of Follis' teammates in Shelby was Branch Rickey, who would later go on to become the general manager for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Charles Follis' legacy likely influenced Rickey to sign Jackie Robinson 45 years after Follis' career began. The story of Charles Follis inspired local playwright Jim Stoner to script a play, in 2013, entitled "The Black Cyclone," in reference to the athlete's nickname. Charles was remembered by his teammates and those closest to him not only for his outstanding play but also his tremendous character.

I thank the committee and urge passage of House Bill 229. I would be more than happy to answer any questions at this time.