



November 20, 2019

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you all for the opportunity to Submit written proponent testimony in support of House Bill 325, which would designate February 18 as Toni Morrison Day in the state of Ohio.

I am writing in strong support of the proposed legislation, HB-325 to designate February 18<sup>th</sup> as Toni Morrison Day. I am a professor in the Department of English at The Ohio State University, Columbus and, thus, can testify as a scholar, teacher, and reader on behalf of the importance of Ms. Morrison's importance to the history of United States literature. Our Ohioan author is not only the recipient of the major prizes for literary fiction (the Nobel Prize, the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Critics Award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the PEN/Saul Bellow Award, etc. etc.), but she has also written some of the most magisterial and important works in the history of American literature. Her work gives expression not just to the historical violence directed at African American people across the centuries of our nation's existence, but more importantly to the vibrant cultural identity that flourished in spite of this violence. As a literary scholar and a fiction writer, Morrison was keenly aware of how national identity is shaped by the stories we tell about its people: her work exploded the range of these stories, thereby making our both our nation and our literature better. She is quite simply the most important novelist of the twentieth century and we should honor her legacy with this day.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Elizabeth Hewitt