



**State Representatives David Leland and Jon Cross**

**Sponsor Testimony – House Bill 417**

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee. Thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 417. This legislation will designate May 23<sup>rd</sup> as “William ‘Dummy’ Hoy Day.” This bill honors the legacy of William Hoy, the most accomplished deaf player in Major League Baseball history.

In 1864, with the country torn in two and embroiled in the greatest conflict then known to man, President Abraham Lincoln took time away from presiding over the civil war to sign a bill into law that would authorize Gallaudet University, in Washington, DC. Gallaudet University was then and still remains the only higher education institution in the world in which all programs are specifically designed for students with hearing disabilities. And if you walk through campus today, you’ll find a baseball diamond – Hoy Field – sandwiched between the academic buildings.

William Hoy was a great baseball player, but he wasn’t a baseball great, and that’s not why we’re honoring him. We’re honoring him because in the field of athletics, “Dummy” Hoy was and remains the embodiment of someone who refused to let their disability define them. In an era before baseball players used gloves – an era when disabled people were often treated as second-class citizens or worse – “Dummy” Hoy overcame his disability to become one of the best baseball players in the world, and he remains a sports icon in the deaf community today. That’s why it’s time to celebrate his pioneering accomplishments in the deaf community and the disability community more broadly, and to honor his legacy by officially designating his birthday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, as William Hoy Day.

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Hoy was born and raised in Houcktown, Ohio in Hancock County. He lost his hearing after suffering from meningitis as a toddler. He graduated from the Ohio School for the Deaf, and then opened a small shoe shop in his hometown. His baseball career was limited to playing on weekends and during the summer, until, after a chance encounter, he had the opportunity to work his way onto several professional teams.

After a stint in semi-professional ball, Hoy played in the Major Leagues for teams from Cincinnati, Buffalo, St. Louis, Chicago, Louisville, and Washington. He was a smart, fast, alert player, who was

extraordinarily rugged despite his small stature – at just 5’6”, he never weighed-in at more than 160 pounds. When he retired, he’d played in 1,797 games – the second-most in baseball history at the time.

His baseball longevity was on display for the last time when, at 99 years old, Hoy threw out the first pitch in a 1961 World Series game between the Cincinnati Reds and the New York Yankees. He received a standing ovation.

To date, Hoy’s accomplishments as an Ohioan and an icon in the deaf community have been honored in numerous ways, including with his induction into the Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame and in a steady flow of theatrical productions celebrating his life and his achievements. This year, Hoy was celebrated in a new motion picture called *The Silent Natural*, which was featured at the National Baseball Hall of Fame. For all these reasons, I believe it’s time for the state of Ohio to join in honoring William Hoy. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.