

**Standing Committees**

Armed Services and Veterans Affairs – Chair  
House Finance  
Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education  
Higher Education

**Special Committees**

Joint Legislative Veterans Caucus – Chair  
Aerospace and Aviation Technology  
Third Frontier Commission Advisory Board  
Latino Affairs Commission



**State Representative Rick Perales**

Ohio's 73<sup>rd</sup> House District: Western Portion of Greene County

**House State and Local Government Committee**

**House Bill 479**

**Sponsor Testimony**

**08 December 2020**

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on House Bill 479. This legislation would require baseball stadiums in Ohio used for minor or major league games to install protective netting from the end of each dugout to the foul poles in both the left and right fields.

Though the risks associated with foul balls are not new to the sport, several incidents have occurred which made the need for safety measures well known. Players and spectators alike have called for netting extensions, including Ohio's own Dina Simpson, who was left blind after being hit at a Lake County Captains game in 2017. We believe this legislation is crucial for public safety in the State of Ohio.

Today, players are more powerful, stadium seating is closer to the field, and spectators are more distracted than ever before. Though strides have been made

by MLB to extend safety netting in 2020, no requirements currently exist to cover the foul line entirely.

- A recent study found that in just four major league parks, over 800 injuries from baseballs were logged from 2012 to 2019<sup>1</sup>
- Another analysis found that 1,750 fans were injured by foul balls nationwide in 2014<sup>2</sup>
- A number of these incidents have occurred in Ohio, at major and minor league games alike; Cleveland, Cincinnati, Eastlake and Toledo have all seen serious injuries to fans<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted that the netting (which meets or exceeds MLB standards) might be pulled back during times when a game is not in play. There have been concerns about fan-player access, which is why retractions are permissible at times, other than when a game is underway.

I hope you will join Representative Patterson and I in supporting this legislation. I welcome any questions committee members may have at this time.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/sports/we-re-going-need-bigger-net-foul-balls-hurt-hundreds-n1060291>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/02/05/make-nets-higher-woman-killed-by-foul-ball-dodger-stadium-family-says/> 3

<sup>3</sup> <https://radio.wosu.org/post/after-numerous-foul-ball-fan-injuries-baseball-reconsiders-protective-netting#stream/0>