

Representative Willis Blackshear Jr. – Joint Sponsor Testimony – HB 340

Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the State and Local Government Committee, I thank you, for giving me the opportunity to provide remarks on behalf of HB 340 designating September as “International Underground Railroad Month”. September marks the month that both Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass made their escape from slavery to freedom. The history of Ohio is intimately linked with the history of the Underground Railroad in the United States. Ohio was a free state in the Union, and crossing the Ohio River was a checkpoint for enslaved people who were escaping to freedom in other Northern states and in Canada. Abolitionists across this state risked their lives to help those who were escaping from horrors unimaginable in the Southern slave states, and hoping for a better life in the North. Designating September as International Underground Railroad Month in Ohio, is not only appropriate, but necessary to honor the history of Ohioans who contributed to Underground Railroad’s mission of justice for enslaved people. With the passage of HB 340, Ohio would be able to join other states who are recognizing and honoring the history of the Underground Railroad in America. I would like to thank this Committee for hearing our testimony, and with that I will leave room for questions.