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Standing Committees  
Transportation, Ranking Member;  
Behavioral Health;  
Finance;  
Government Oversight;  
Public Health Policy;  
Economic & Workforce Development

## **Before the House State & Local Government Committee**

### **House Bill 342 – Designate Devo Day**

### **Sponsor testimony provided by Representative Michele Grim**

**April 9, 2024**

Chair John, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan and members of the State and Local Government Committee thank you so much for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 342, which would designate April 18<sup>th</sup> as Devo Day.

#### **DEVO DAY**

Three-time nominees to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, Devo has made a seismic impact on American popular culture. The band's influence in the world of new wave, rock and electronic music can be heard in bands as varied as The B-52s, Sparks, Talking Heads and They Might Be Giants. The aftershocks of their approach to personal expression and performance are still evident today, as artists and musicians build interdisciplinary creative worlds to share their vision, in the form of costumes, makeup, music videos, and virtual worlds and experiences.

Since their first performance at Kent State University's Creative Arts Festival on April 18, 1973, Devo has created a body of work that embraces music and video. Some of the band's members changed through the years, but the standard lineup for their most popular period in the 1980s included brothers Mark and Bob Mothersbaugh; Gerald and Bob Casale; and drummer Alan Myers.

#### **VISION + BIRTH**

As students at Kent State, several band members were catalyzed into creation by a pivotal moment in Ohio history: the May 1970 campus shooting of several fellow students and protestors by the Ohio National Guard. As the group formed, they shared a sense that postwar optimism and peace, love and happiness of the hippie movement felt similarly alien. Was the world de-evolving? Their frustration and shock transformed into something generative and new, made from the elements of popular and mainstream culture.

When you feel like the world is working or running backward and unlearning its lessons, and you have the gnawing sense that the standard expectations and roles aren't going to fit, being

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creative is always a possible response. Drawing lessons from art movements like Dada and Futurism, Casale and Mothersbaugh aimed for their music to sound like what they were seeing each day on the news and on television: missiles and lasers.

As the band grew and developed an audience in Akron and around the country, trips to New York City to play gigs showed them there were others who thought in similarly divergent ways. Their wild look and sound from the midwest frontier attracted fans like David Bowie, who described Devo as the “band of the future.” Their 1978 debut album *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!* was produced by electronic music wunderkind Brian Eno.

Devo had been a hit on the art rock circuit for several years when their 1980 record *Freedom of Choice* and its biggest hit “Whip It” gained the attention of nationwide radio stations and television programs like American Bandstand. The band’s iconic industrial suits and “energy dome” hats were transmitted around the world accompanied by the catchy whip sounds, bass line, and synthesizer.

Like their rust belt creative kin Andy Warhol, Devo showed creative expression is within reach of everyone.

**DECLARATION**

For showing us that you can grow up in Akron and hum a tune that gets stuck in everyone’s head;

For being a guiding light to generations of offbeat midwest creatives with a desire to use their voices to signal a new direction;

For demonstrating that creating a new expression is always a possible response to a world that sometimes feels alien; and

For proving that creativity from the rust belt can change the trajectory of American culture;  
We do honor and celebrate Devo Day on April 18.

Chair John, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan and members of the State and Local Government Committee thank you so much again for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 342. I’m happy to take any questions you may have.