



Representatives Richard Dell'Aquila
Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 297
House State and Local Government Committee
December 3rd, 2024

Thank you Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairman Dean, Ranking Member Brennan, and distinguished members of the Ohio House State and Local Government Committee for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony in support of HB 297, a proposal to commemorate November 18, 1983 as **"A Christmas Story Family Day,"** in recognition of the date of release 41 years ago of the now iconic movie, *"A Christmas Story,"* which was partially filmed in Cleveland.

This commemoration is particularly significant for my Ohio House District 15 as well as the entire City of Cleveland. The house featured in the movie is located in Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood, (at 3159 W 11th Street, Cleveland, Ohio), a culturally and economically diverse area of the city, hosting numbers of visitors each year wishing to visit the film attraction and museum which were opened to the public on November 25, 2006, with original cast members attending the grand opening. The event drew 4,300 visitors just during its opening weekend. (The official name of the attraction was changed to "House from A Christmas Story" in mid-2023.)

This holiday film has justifiably joined the ranks of several other Christmas classics, (e.g. *"Miracle on 34th Street," "It's A Wonderful Life," "How the Grinch Stole Christmas"*) and so may others that have become so important for youngsters and families in celebration of the holiday season. And for those of us of a certain age, many of the scenes recall our own childhood Christmas memories as well.

The 19th-century Victorian home has been restored and renovated to appear just as it did in the film, both inside and outside. The museum across the street is part of a complex of four buildings devoted to the film and is open to the public year round, along with a gift shop.

The site was selected for filming from among 20 possible locations--and Cleveland's downtown former Higbee's Department store is also featured in the film. The movie contains exterior shots and some interiors of the house where Ralphie Parker (the young main character) lives.

Now recognized as a Christmas classic, *"A Christmas Story"* has achieved ever increasing critical acclaim over the years and has won several awards. As a brief example, AOL ranked the film their #1 Christmas film of all time and IGN ranked the film the top holiday-themed film of all time. In 2012, a Marist Poll named the film the favorite holiday film in the US. In 2019, a poll commissioned by Tubitv and conducted by Onepoll also ranked the film Best Holiday Movie Ever. *"A Christmas Story"* also

received a nomination for Best Digital – Comedy, and won Best Digital – Animation/Family at the 2023 Golden Trailer Awards.

Clearly, “*A Christmas Story*” has become widely popular with children as well as adults and is now an annual Christmas fixture. Humorous and delightful, the film is imbued with a period flavor somewhere in the mid-20th century. As a result of all this, there is widespread interest in visiting the film site.

The museum displays some of the props from the film which fans will recognize, including Randy's snow suit, the Higbee's window toys, the chalk board from Miss Shields' classroom, hundreds of behind-the-scenes photos, as well as one of the custom-built Daisy Red Ryder BB guns that was used in the filming. The historical, economic, and cultural significance of this commendation is indisputable.

This proposal will contribute to the continuing redevelopment of the entire Tremont neighborhood and enhance the prestige of the City of Cleveland and Ohio in general by bringing more national attention to the location where this cherished film was sited, to say nothing of the potential increase in tourism. And how much more appropriate could it be than to advance this bill now--just before the 2024 Christmas holiday?

I therefore respectfully request your support for this bill and would be pleased to answer any questions. Thank you.