



## **Hearcel F. Craig**

Assistant Minority Leader  
15<sup>th</sup> Senate District

**Senate Transportation Committee  
Senate Bill 161 Sponsor Testimony  
Create the Ohio NAACP License Plate  
October 11, 2023**

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the committee, thank you for giving Senator Smith and me the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 161. This legislation creates the “Ohio NAACP” license plate, which will support the mission of the Ohio Conference of Units of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Created over one hundred years ago, in 1909, a group of individuals came together to establish the NAACP. Of those people, you may recognize the names of W.E.B. Du Bois, Mary White Ovington, and Ida B. Wells. It is important to note that the NAACP was then, as it is now, a racially diverse organization. In fact, its first National President, Moorfield Storey, was a white attorney from Boston. The NAACP’s diverse coalition went on to win important victories for people of color, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights act of 1965. There are 2,200 chapters across this country, and forty-eight of them are in this great state.

The first NAACP chapter in Ohio was Cleveland, established in 1914. In the following year, chapters were formed in Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, and Toledo. These early organizations were tasked with building bridges across racial and socio-economic divides, a mission that continues to this day. From desegregating schools to advancing civil and human rights across the state, Ohio’s NAACP chapters have been responsible for significant progress.

Since its founding in 1931, the Ohio Conference for the NAACP has had a clear and distinctive focus in addressing political, educational, social, and economic equality for all Ohioans. I’d especially like to recognize Nana Watson, President of the Columbus Chapter, and Tom Roberts, President of the Ohio Conference, for their continued work and dedication to the NAACP’s mission to remove all barriers of racial discrimination through the democratic process - the very same process that is taking place at this moment.

The Ohio Conference for the NAACP answers with honor and distinction the clarion call for freedom, justice, and equality for all residents of Ohio, and indeed, all Americans. This legislation enables Ohioans to support the NAACP’s essential mission by not only ensuring that proceeds from the license plates go to the Ohio NAACP, but also by raising awareness of the good work of this organization as these license plates travel roads and highways in Ohio and beyond. I ask for your support. Thank you.