

Committees:

Arts, Athletics, & Tourism, **Ranking Member**
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Office: 614-466-5345
Email: Rep01@ohiohouse.gov

Office of Assistant Minority Leader Dontavius L. Jarrells
Doug Worthington
Proponent Testimony for HB 255

Chair Miller, Vice Chair Hiner, Ranking Member Jarrells, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my support for House Bill 255.

My name is Doug Worthington. I'm a former NFL player, an entrepreneur, a public speaker, and a proud graduate of The Ohio State University, where I served as captain of the Buckeye football team. But before any of that, I was just a kid growing up in Buffalo, N.Y., trying to find my way, looking for something to believe in.

Sports gave me that.

It gave me purpose, discipline, and the strength to push through when life got tough. I've taken hits on the field, fought back from injury, and stood in front of roaring crowds in stadiums that felt like home. Every step of the way, I carried with me the pride of being from Ohio and the knowledge that sports could open doors that nothing else could.

But my story isn't unique. All across this state, in small towns and big cities alike, young people are chasing dreams with cleats on their feet or a ball in their hands. They're learning how to lead, how to lose with grace, how to win with humility. They're discovering who they are and who they want to become.

And right now, many of them are doing it without the resources or opportunities they deserve.

House Bill 255 creates a pathway to change that. It recognizes what many of us already know to be true, that sports are one of Ohio's greatest assets. From the NFL Draft in Cleveland to the MLS All-Star Game in Columbus to baseball in Cincinnati, sports already bring in billions of dollars and create thousands of jobs. But beyond the economic impact, there's a deeper truth. Sports build pride. They create community. They give kids a reason to dream and families a reason to come together.

This bill lays the groundwork for a statewide Sports Commission that would help coordinate those efforts, invest in underserved communities, and make sure the power of sports reaches every corner of Ohio. It would help us understand where the

opportunities are, bring major events to our towns, and develop smart policy to grow sports-related infrastructure and tourism.

I've traveled across this state speaking to young athletes, parents, and community leaders. And I can tell you that the hunger is real. People want to build. They want to believe that where they live matters. That their kids matter. That their dreams don't have to be limited by geography or circumstance.

This commission helps us deliver on that promise.

I've stood in the tunnel at Ohio Stadium and heard the roar of a hundred thousand fans. I've been cheered by strangers who didn't know my story but believed in what I represented. Today, I speak not for the athlete I was, but for the children and families I now mentor. For the young man who looks me in the eye and asks, "Can I make it too?" I want him to know the answer is yes—because his state is behind him.

House Bill 255 gives us the tools to turn that yes into reality.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak, and thank you for your consideration of this important bill.