

Chairman Willis, Vice Chair Daniels, Ranking Member Grim, and esteemed colleagues of the House Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 35, which will designate a portion of OH-125 in Scioto County as the Al Oliver Highway.

For context, this bill successfully passed out of the House last General Assembly but did not make it across the finish line. Portsmouth, Ohio, has a rich baseball history—it was home to Branch Rickey, the man who made the historic decision to sign Jackie Robinson, breaking baseball's color barrier.

Al Oliver is a Major League Baseball (MLB) legend, born and raised in Portsmouth. Before his baseball career, he served our country in the National Guard, grounding himself in faith and service. He is a registered minister and ordained deacon, living a life of integrity beyond the ballfield. At a time when many players in the league were experimenting with drugs, Mr. Oliver once told me he preferred to stay in his room and order room service—an anecdote that speaks volumes about his character.

Over his impressive career with the Pittsburgh Pirates and other teams, Mr. Oliver earned seven All-Star selections and won three Silver Slugger Awards. With over 2,700 hits and a career .303 batting average, his achievements on the field brought immense pride to our state and continue to inspire young athletes today.

In 2013, the Portsmouth City Council fittingly named him “Mr. Ambassador” for the city, recognizing his lifelong contributions to the community. His legacy is also immortalized on the Portsmouth Floodwall Murals.

Al Oliver's life story is one of perseverance, integrity, and excellence. By designating this highway in his honor, we not only celebrate a local hero but also create a lasting tribute to the idea that greatness is within reach for all of us, regardless of where we come from. This highway will serve as a source of pride for Ohioans and an inspiration for generations to come.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 35. I'm happy to take any questions at this time.