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**Sponsor Testimony for Senate Bill 111 of the 136th General
Assembly
Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
October 22, 2025**

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on legislation that would **designate October 4th as Henrietta Lacks Day** in the State of Ohio, legislation I am proud to introduce alongside my joint sponsor, Senator Johnson.

Mrs. Henrietta Lacks was a remarkable African American woman whose DNA and story continue to shape science, medicine, and ethics in research. **In 1951, at the age of 31**, she was diagnosed with cervical cancer. During her treatment at Johns Hopkins Hospital, doctors took samples of her cancer cells without her knowledge or consent. **These cells, later known as the HeLa cell line, derived from the first two letters of her first and last names, became the first immortalized human cell line, capable of reproducing indefinitely in a laboratory setting.**

The HeLa cells revolutionized medical research. They were instrumental in the development of the polio vaccine, cancer treatments, gene mapping, in vitro fertilization, and even COVID-19 vaccine research.

Yet, Mrs. Lacks herself never knew of her contribution to science. She passed away on October 4, 1951, at the age of 31, leaving behind her husband and five children. Her family would not learn of the use of

her cells until more than two decades later, and for many years, her story went untold.

By **designating October 4th as *Henrietta Lacks Day***, the State of Ohio will join the other states and institutions in recognizing her extraordinary impact, a story that stands at the intersection of medical innovation, bioethics, and racial justice. This day will not only honor Mrs. Lacks' **immense contribution to humanity but also serve as a reminder of the importance of informed consent, equity in research, and respect for human dignity.**

We are proud to introduce this legislation to ensure that Henrietta Lacks' name and contributions are remembered for generations to come. Her life reminds us of that progress in science must always be guided by justice, transparency, and respect for the individuals who make that progress possible.

Chair Manchester and members of the committee, thank you for your consideration of this legislation, and I respectfully ask for your support.