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**Committees:**

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Local Government, Public Safety,  
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Rules and Reference  
Ways and Means  
Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education

**Cecil Thomas**  
State Senator  
9th District

**Sponsor Testimony**  
**House State and Local Government Committee**  
**SB 18—Jesse Owens Day**

Chairwoman Anielski, Vice Chair Hambly, and Ranking Member Bischoff, thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 18, which designates September 12 as Jesse Owens Day.

Jesse Owens was born into sharecropping Alabama on September 12, 1912. Like millions of other African Americans, the Owens family moved north during the First Great Migration, settling in Cleveland, Ohio when Jesse was nine years old. After an impressive career as a student in the Cleveland public school system, Jesse graduated from East Technical High School and enrolled at Ohio State University.

Jesse became known as the “Buckeye Bullet” for his achievements on the track. During his impressive career at Ohio State, he won a record eight N.C.A.A. championships. Jesse also set four world records in a span of 45 minutes at the Big Ten Championships on May 25, 1935, which is still considered one of the greatest athletic feats of all-time.

Jesse Owens is best known for his performance at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. With the entire world watching, Owens won four gold medals at an event that was supposed to be a showcase for Nazi Germany and a demonstration of Aryan racial superiority.

Jesse Owens has received many honors during his life and after his death in 1980. He has been named as a famous Ohioan, and the track and field stadium on the campus of Ohio State University bears his name. Most notably, Jesse Owens was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1976 by President Gerald Ford.

Jesse Owens is remembered as an ambassador for American ideals, both at home and abroad. While his incredible athleticism is impressive on its own accord, his legacy is all the more noteworthy because of the character he showed in the face of bigotry. Recognizing Jesse Owens on his birthday – September 12 – is a fitting tribute for one of Ohio’s greatest native sons.

Please support me in honoring a true Ohio legend.