



**Representative Joe Miller, Ohio House District 56
Ohio House State and Local Government Committee - HB 325 Testimony
November 6, 2019**

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill (HB) 325 alongside my co-sponsor, Representative Howse. HB 325 creates Toni Morrison Day in Ohio, appropriately on February 18th, Ms. Morrison's birthday. It is our hope that this expression of appreciation for the life and legacy of Toni Morrison will serve as an annual reminder of her impact, and a chance for new generations to benefit from her work.

Toni Morrison was born Chloe Ardelia Wofford on February 18, 1931 in the city of Lorain, which I am honored to now represent here in the Ohio House. She grew up in Lorain, graduating from Lorain High School with honors, and working at our local library shelving books in her younger years. Even as her career took her around the world, often far away from our corner of the country, the significance of her Lorain heritage meant more and more to our community. In the interest of not repeating the testimony of my co-sponsor, I won't go back through her exhaustive resume. Suffice to say, seeing someone from our neighborhood rise to worldwide renown and recognition, including being the first African-American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, is a continual source of pride for all of us in the Lorain area.

That pride is reflected locally in library exhibits, historical society events, and even Toni Morrison Elementary School in Lorain. As we speak, Lorain County Community College is preparing for an event this evening called "A Celebration of Toni Morrison" featuring Dr. Marilyn Sanders Mobley, a founding member and former President of The Toni Morrison Society. Our pride has been echoed by the Lorain City Council and the Lorain County Board of Commissioners, who themselves passed Toni Morrison Day resolutions.

But the significance of Toni Morrison's life is so much more than a local story. It's a source of inspiration for people across the state, and across the country. Just last week, Ohio Senators Sherrod Brown and Rob Portman introduced Senate Resolution 402, "honoring the life, work and legacy of Toni Morrison". I am excited that the state of Ohio now has the opportunity to do our part in recognizing Ms. Morrison by designating February 18th as Toni Morrison Day.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.