



**State Senator Nickie J. Antonio**  
**District 23**

**State Senator Sandra R. Williams**  
**District 21**

Senate Transportation Committee  
December 8, 2021  
Sponsor Testimony SB 255

Good afternoon Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, and members of the Senate Transportation Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 255, which designates a portion of State Route 10 in Cleveland, also known as Lorain Avenue, as the “Officer Wayne A. Leon Memorial Highway.”

Wayne Allen Leon was appointed to the Cleveland Police Department in the 110th Academy Class in February 1994 and graduated in June of that same year, assigned to the Third District basic patrol. Quickly, Officer Leon became known amongst his peers as a genuine, honest, and sincere public servant who worked tirelessly on the behalf of others. He was also a dedicated family man who called home each night during his shift to say good night to each of his children.

During his six and a half years of service, Wayne received many commendations from the community for his dedication. In 1998, he was awarded the Cleveland Police Department's highest award, the Medal of Honor, for his devotion to the city he so diligently served. Officer Leon often said, “You can’t tell me we’re not making a difference out here!” while touring his zone in the Third District.

Tragically, on June 25, 2000, Officer Leon was shot and killed during a routine traffic stop. Officer Leon’s memory is kept alive by his wife, Grace, and their children Justin, Gabrielle and Nicholas Leon. The Northern Ohio Violent Fugitive Task Force was created in his memory, as well as the Cleveland Heroes Run and many scholarships. Every year on June 25th, Officer Leon’s legacy carries on with Random Acts of Law Enforcement Kindness Day, during which local police carry out kind acts in their communities.

Throughout this process, we have worked with Officer Leon’s widow, Grace, to identify a stretch of road that would be meaningful for her and her family. The portion of Lorain Avenue in front of St. Ignatius High School was selected because Officer Leon was a proud alumni, as are his sons Justin and Nicholas. It was also one of the stretches of road Officer Leon’s funeral motorcade passed down, where hundreds of students from his alma mater came to pay one last tribute to him.

Although nothing can truly do justice to the weight of Officer Leon's sacrifice, a memorial highway designation will serve as a physical embodiment of the mark he left on the world, which lives on today through his family, his former colleagues and his beloved community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation. We are happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.