



**Assistant Minority Whip  
Hearcel F. Craig  
15<sup>th</sup> Senate District**

Transportation Committee  
Senate Bill 298 Sponsor Testimony  
Senator Hearcel F. Craig  
May 18, 2022

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony today on Senate Bill 298. This piece of bipartisan legislation would name a portion of State Route 315, extending from King Avenue to Broad Street, the “Jesse Owens Memorial Highway.”

James Cleveland “Jesse” Owens was an American world-class student athlete who specialized in sprints and long jump. In his lifetime, he was recognized as “perhaps the greatest and most famous athlete in track and field history.” Jesse Owens shattered world and Olympic records in track and field. Although Owens was recognized globally, he endured hardships and faced racial discrimination at home. While attending the Ohio State University, Owens lived at 292 South Oakley. He was not permitted to live on campus because Black students were not allowed to live in campus dorms. Even after Owens’ Olympic success, he continued to face discrimination and did not receive the credit or respect that he deserved.

He eventually withdrew from the Ohio State University before he was able to finish his degree. However, Thirty-two years later, the University awarded him an honorary doctorate of athletic arts “for his unparalleled skill and ability” as an athlete and for “his personification of sportsmanship ideals.” Jesse Owens spent the remainder of his life running several businesses, raising his family, promoting the Olympics and volunteering his time as an advocate for children. Upon the news of Jesse Owen’s death, President Jimmy Carter issued a tribute to him stating: “Perhaps no athlete better symbolized the human struggle against tyranny, poverty and racial bigotry.”

The Jesse Owens Memorial Highway will illustrate the connection between the Jesse Owens Memorial Stadium and his home on the west side of Columbus, where he lived while attending the Ohio State University. The highway will be a testament to a man who served his city, state, and country - both on and off the track field - in the face of discrimination and hardship.

I want to take a moment to thank Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio and the members of the Transportation Committee for the opportunity to consider this legislation. I welcome any questions you might have at this time.