Thank you very much Chairman Uecker, and Honorable Members of the Ohio Senate Committee on Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs.

Thank you for the privilege of speaking to you today in support of HB229. Over the past 4 years I have had the privilege of portraying Branch Rickey in more than a dozen stage performances of the story of Charles Follis, The Black Cyclone. I have come to know Branch Rickey quite well; born and raised in southern Ohio, he was insistent that his impression of the character qualities of Charles as a young football and baseball player was the propulsion that drove him for 40 years to look for another like him until in 1947, as an owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, he was able to sign Jackie Robinson as the first black professional baseball player in America, thereby changing forever the face of sports in America! He said that it would never have happened had it not been for the example of Charles Follis. I encourage you to honor Charles Follis, this icon of Ohio and American sports history, by supporting HB229. Thank you for this privilege.