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HARAZ N. GHANBARI

State Representative | Ohio House District 3

June 11, 2019

Chairman Green, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and distinguished members of the Transportation and Public Safety Committee.

It is an honor to stand before you as the author of House Bills 275 and 276, to designate the SGT Arthur A. Mora, Jr., Memorial Highway and the Master Chief Special Warfare Operator (SEAL) Edward C. Byers, Jr. Medal of Honor Recipient Highway, respectively.

As young men, both Art and Ed raised their right hand and took an oath to protect and defend. Sergeant Mora gave his last measure of devotion in defense of this nation on October 19, 2005, while serving during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Sergeant Mora, originally from Pico Rivera, California, was assigned to the 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Georgia. He was killed in action when his Humvee was struck by enemy indirect fire during patrol operations in Balad, Iraq. Also killed were Army Specialists Russell H. Nahvi and Jose E. Rosario. Sergeant Mora is buried at the historic Fort Meigs Union Cemetery in Perrysburg, Ohio, where his widow Veronica and their children Olivia, Celina, and Christopher live.

I have visited the grave of Sergeant Mora on multiple occasions, often in the quiet stillness of the day. Reading his headstone one would never know his son was just eight days old when his father died. The father and son never met. Sergeant Mora would never cuddle his son in his arms, kiss him good night, read him a bedtime story, or play soldiers in their back yard. However, if you have the privilege to meet Christopher Mora, you have then had the honor of meeting his late father. Christopher's smile and mannerisms are just that of his dad. Sergeant Mora's family is very involved in our community, and across the country, on behalf of service members, veterans, their families as well as other Gold Star Families. I thank them for their strength and compassion.

Master Chief Byers was awarded the nation's highest military honor, the Medal of Honor, by President Barack Obama on February 29, 2016, and became the sixth Navy SEAL in U.S. history, and the first living Navy SEAL since the Vietnam War to receive the Medal of Honor. A Chief Petty Officer at the time of the mission on December 8, 2012, to rescue Dr. Dilip Joseph, an American citizen being detained by the Taliban in a mountainous region in the Qarghah'i District of Laghman Province, Byers was serving as a Hostage Rescue Force Team Member in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Master Chief Byer's SEAL teammate, Petty Officer 1st Class Nicolas D. Checque, 28, of Monroeville, Pennsylvania, was killed in action during the rescue mission and was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross. Master Chief Byers' official Medal of Honor citation is attached as an addendum to my testimony.

War is hell. For those who have served, we will never fully escape the sights, the sounds and smells of war. I will always remember standing at attention late at night on New Year's Day 2011 in Kandahar, Afghanistan, as a carry team carried the remains of a fallen Army soldier – Army Sergeant Michael J. Beckerman. Like

Sergeant Mora, who I never met, I also never met Sergeant Beckerman. Both of these men died far from their loved ones and friends. They died in a foreign land, and made the journey home to their final resting place.

Sergeant Mora and Master Chief Byers are examples of the best our country has to offer. The passage of House Bills 275 and 276 would be a small, yet last gesture, of gratitude to these patriots. We shall never forget the service and the sacrifice of our living and our dead, and thus I respectfully urge passage of House Bill 275 and 276.



Haraz N. Ghanbari
Member of the Ohio House of Representatives

MEDAL OF HONOR

CHIEF SPECIAL WARFARE OPERATOR (SEA, AIR, AND LAND)

EDWARD C. BYERS, JR.

UNITED STATES NAVY

For service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as a Hostage Rescue Force Team Member in Afghanistan in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM from 8 to 9 December 2012. As the rescue force approached the target building, an enemy sentry detected them and darted inside to alert his fellow captors. The sentry quickly reemerged, and the lead assaulter attempted to neutralize him. Chief Byers with his team sprinted to the door of the target building. As the primary breacher, Chief Byers stood in the doorway fully exposed to enemy fire while ripping down six layers of heavy blankets fastened to the inside ceiling and walls to clear a path for the rescue force. The first assaulter pushed his way through the blankets, and was mortally wounded by enemy small arms fire from within. Chief Byers, completely aware of the imminent threat, fearlessly rushed into the room and engaged an enemy guard aiming an AK-47 at him. He then tackled another adult male who had darted towards the corner of the room. During the ensuing hand-to-hand struggle, Chief Byers confirmed the man was not the hostage and engaged him. As other rescue team members called out to the hostage, Chief Byers heard a voice respond in English and raced toward it. He jumped atop the American hostage and shielded him from the high volume of fire within the small room. While covering the hostage with his body, Chief Byers immobilized another guard with his bare hands, and restrained the guard until a teammate could eliminate him. His bold and decisive actions under fire saved the lives of the hostage and several of his teammates. By his undaunted courage, intrepid fighting spirit, and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of near certain death, Chief Petty Officer Byers reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.