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Kevin D. Miller  
State Representative

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice-chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas and fellow members of the Homeland Security Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony House Bill 483 which would create a "Save a Warrior" license plate.

Colleagues, we have a mental health crisis in this state and in this country. Mental health issues and suicide rates have been increasing every year. In Ohio, 15 deaths for every 100,000 people are attributed to suicide. Unfortunately, this number increases dramatically in our veteran and first responder populations.

According to the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, 1 in 4 police officers have had thoughts of suicide at some point in their lives and 85% of first responders experience mental health issues like depression and PTSD. With respect to our veterans, in 2021 alone, 6,392 committed suicide, 242 of those veterans were fellow Ohioans. These statistics are staggering.

Fortunately, mental health issues are treatable, and suicide is preventable. Many organizations have made it their mission to help treat our veterans and first responders. One such organization is the Save a Warrior Foundation. Save a Warrior has dedicated their mission to save the lives of service men and women and first responders through a holistic intervention approach to addressing the challenges that come with PTSD.

Save a Warrior was previously located in my District but has since moved their operations to Highland County where they have expanded their facilities to help save the lives of countless heroes. I have personally visited the facility on several occasions and witnessed the great work they do.

This license plate would not only spread awareness of this amazing organization, but it would also provide Save a Warrior with additional funding for outreach and programming. Please stand with me against the suicide epidemic and support a wonderful organization with a proven track record of saving the lives of those who protect our communities and our country.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I will be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.