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Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 553

Good morning, Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and esteemed members of the Homeland Security Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 533. As a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., I'll start with a confession—it's rare for me to talk about another fraternity, but today, I'm here to shine a light on our brothers of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Incorporated. Now, I know the Alphas built the foundation, but the Iotas would remind us they're "building a tradition, not resting upon one."

This bill is a step toward recognizing Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.'s rich history and cultural contributions by establishing a specialty license plate in its name.

Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. was founded on September 19, 1963, on the campus of Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. It was a time of monumental social and civil rights movements, and the fraternity's 12 founders—nontraditional students, many of whom were veterans, married, and working full-time while pursuing their education—rose to the occasion.

Built on the principles of Scholarship, Leadership, Citizenship, Fidelity, and Brotherhood, Iota Phi Theta has grown to become the fifth-largest predominantly African American fraternity in the United States. Its motto, "Building a Tradition, Not Resting Upon One," reflects its continued commitment to meaningful societal contributions, particularly in advancing the welfare of African Americans.

Today, with over 300 chapters spanning 40 states and abroad, Iota Phi Theta remains dedicated to leadership development, community service, and cultural awareness.

The issuance of an Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. specialty license plate will:

1. **Honor and celebrate the legacy** of an organization that has been a guiding force in social justice and unity.
2. **Allocate funds to the Delta Theta Omega chapter in Ohio**, enabling the chapter to support scholarship, leadership, and community development programs.
3. **Support cultural representation along Ohio's highways**, reflecting our state's shared values of diversity and inclusion.

This bill aligns with Ohio's tradition of offering specialty license plates to honor organizations that make a positive impact in our communities. By supporting this legislation, we allow citizens to show pride in an organization that continues to uplift and transform lives.

As a proud Alpha, I know firsthand how fraternal organizations foster unity, promote service, and uplift communities. House Bill 533 is an opportunity for Ohio to celebrate the unique legacy and contributions of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., and support its continued mission to empower individuals and communities.

Thank you for your time and attention. I'd be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.