

**Introduction:**

Good morning, Chairperson - Ghanbari, Vice Chairperson - Plummer, Ranking Member - Thomas, and esteemed members of the Homeland Security Committee. My name is Nikki Snead, and I am here today to speak in support of the creation of the "Save a Warrior" license plate.

**Personal Connection:**

In July 1992, I joined the Ohio State Highway Patrol, and in July 1994, I graduated as an Ohio State Trooper. I retired in April of this year and currently work as a Police Sergeant at Capital University. I have experienced many events most would consider traumatic and felt as if I was handling everything just fine—until I wasn't. With unresolved childhood trauma and the realities of First Responder trauma, I found myself doing and saying things that were uncharacteristic.

I noticed things were bothering me that otherwise would not have, and I felt myself changing. I displayed outward signs of "hurt." I recall the first time I spoke the words, "I understand why they took their own life." That startled me. Although I always thought I could not do it myself, I understood that I did not know what I did not know. When a person is at their lowest, they are capable of just about anything, and I worried I would do or say something I could not take back. I sought help.

As a First Responder for my entire adult life, I have seen firsthand the struggles that many of my fellow Police Officers, Firefighters, EMTs, Dispatchers, and Military Personnel face in doing their respective jobs. The transition to, and navigation of, civilian life can be incredibly challenging, and the mental health support available is often insufficient. The stigma behind mental health and wellness for veterans and first responders is also difficult to navigate.

A friend mentioned Save a Warrior to me. I did the work, hit submit, and answered the call. I found myself in a basement in a beanfield in Hillsboro, Ohio, with nine other women and some shepherds. There, I experienced an intensive holistic approach to dealing with my Complex PTS, in a residential environment, with an unparalleled level of community support and a focus on service.

I DID THE WORK. Since leaving Warrior Village 1,092 days ago, I have continued to do the work and use what I learned there to help myself, and others. Save a Warrior changed the trajectory of my life. I appreciate the intrinsic value of Save a Warrior. I had to lean in and be open to the coaching, but I do not know where I would be otherwise. One day I said, I would like to show my support, how can I do that in an original way?

**Purpose of the License Plate:**

The "Save a Warrior" license plate is more than just a piece of metal on a vehicle. It is a visible representation of our commitment to supporting veterans and first responders, raising awareness about the mental health challenges they face. The funds raised from the sale of these plates will directly support a program dedicated to providing a comprehensive and supportive environment

for those who have served our state and nation. The Save a Warrior program helps them overcome their struggles and lead fulfilling lives.

**Impact on the Community:**

By creating this license plate, we are not only supporting individual veterans and first responders but also strengthening our community. When our veterans and first responders receive the help they need, they are better able to give back to society, whether through work, volunteerism, or simply being present for their families, and others. Seeing these plates on the road will also serve as a visible sign of support.

**Call to Action:**

I urge you to support the creation of the ‘Save a Warrior’ license plate. This small act of recognition and support can make a significant difference in the lives of our veterans and first responders. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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I strongly support the creation of the “Save a Warrior” license plate. This initiative not only raises awareness about the mental health challenges faced by veterans and first responders but also provides crucial funding for programs that help them overcome their struggles and lead fulfilling lives. By supporting this license plate, we can make a significant difference in our community and show our commitment to those who have served our state and nation.

Save a Warrior has evolved from a man doing a great thing to an organization continuing to do great things in the lives of our military and first responders. With the motto of "We Came Back For You", and "Just Save One" I want to show my support and help those who so freely help others.

The purpose of creating a “Save a Warrior” Ohio license plate is to raise awareness about the mental health challenges faced by veterans and first responders. The license plate serves as a visible symbol of support and commitment to these individuals. Additionally, the funds raised from the sale of these plates directly support programs that provide comprehensive and supportive environments, helping veterans and first responders overcome their struggles and lead fulfilling lives. This initiative not only benefits those who have served but also strengthens the community as a whole.