



**Representative Tex Fischer**  
**59<sup>th</sup> Ohio House District**

Chair Hall, Vice Chair Ferguson, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on House Bill 53, which designates February 4th as John Rankin Day and commissions a statue of Rev. John Rankin to be built on statehouse grounds.

Residing in Ripley, Ohio, John Rankin served as one of the first and most important figures in the early era of the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad. Originally from Tennessee, Rankin moved to Ohio to escape the influence of slavery. When he discovered that his own brother had become a slaveholder, he published a series of letters to him in his local paper, *The Castigator*, making the moral case for immediate abolition. These letters would eventually become the bedrock of the entire American abolitionist movement. They were also successful, as his brother was convinced to free his slaves three years later.

His house in Ripley, Ohio also served as a central hub of the Underground Railroad. Between 1829 and 1865, over 2,000 enslaved people passed through his home on their journey to freedom. In both the spreading of ideas and working on the ground, John Rankin is a hero of the abolitionist movement, and a great Ohioan whose legacy we can all celebrate.

Unfortunately, despite his widespread impact, Rev. John Rankin's name is not mentioned enough when telling the story of the abolitionist movement and the ultimate downfall of slavery in the United States. But, as demonstrated by the accomplishments in his lifetime, that story truly cannot be told without Rankin's impact.

By recognizing John Rankin, we can honor his legacy as one of Ohio's greatest abolitionists and can serve as a reminder for years to come that we all have power to do create change if we are willing to stand up for what we know is right.

I would also like to thank my friend, Caleb Franz, who recently wrote a biography on Rev. Rankin, for his help in telling Rankin's story to me. I encourage you to support this bill so this story can live on for future generations of Ohioans to learn the lessons taught by John Rankin's extraordinary life.

Thank you for your time today, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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