

THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF



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Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein and remaining committee members Good Afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 253, which would designate February 20th as "Black Ohioan Civil War Medal of Honor Recipient Day." This recognition is both timely and overdue.

The Medal of Honor is our nation's highest military decoration, awarded for acts of valor above and beyond the call of duty. During the American Civil War, at a time when the very fabric of this nation was being tested, Black soldiers from Ohio stood up not only to defend the Union but also to affirm their right to freedom, dignity, and citizenship. Among them were individuals whose heroism earned the Medal of Honor—a recognition that, in their time, came not with full equality, but often despite the prejudice and injustice they faced both in military service and civilian life.

Designating February 20th as a day to honor these individuals provides an opportunity to:

- **Preserve historical memory:** Too often, the contributions of Black Americans in the Civil War are marginalized in public discourse. This designation ensures their bravery and sacrifice are acknowledged and remembered.
- **Educate future generations:** By recognizing this day, we invite schools, civic institutions, and communities to learn about Ohio's Black Medal of Honor recipients, their stories, and their legacy.
- **Promote unity through shared history:** These soldiers fought not just for themselves, but for the idea of a more perfect Union. Honoring them reminds us that the story of America's progress is a shared one—fought for and shaped by all of us.

As Ohioans, we take pride in our state's rich history and the role we've played in shaping the nation. By enacting S.B 253, we affirm that part of that pride must include recognizing those Black Ohioans whose courage and sacrifice helped preserve the nation during its most perilous hour.

I respectfully urge the committee to support this bill and honor these heroes with the recognition they so rightfully deserve.

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I respectfully ask that the committee vote in favor of Senate Bill 253.

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the committee thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of S.B.253 today.