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Senate Transportation Committee
Senate Bill 289 — Sponsor Testimony
February 16th, 2022

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill 289.

Senate Bill 289 would designate the portion of Interstate 70 in Fairfield County as the “Corporal Dustin A. Derga Memorial Highway”.

Corporal Derga grew up interested in serving the public. At his funeral, his father, Bob, recounted that at a young age, Dustin decided to grow up either as a soldier or as a fireman. As such, after graduating from Pickerington High School, Dustin enrolled at Columbus State to pursue a degree in fire science, and enrolled in the Marine Reserves. During his studies, he also became a volunteer fire fighter for Basil Joint Fire Department in Fairfield County.

In May 2005, on Mother’s Day no less, Corporal Derga and his Lima Company unit were serving near the Syria-Iraq border during Operation Matador. While conducting house-to-house searches, his unit was hit with insurgent machine gun fire from the inside of a house that they were entering. Upon being hit in the back by an armor piercing round, Corporal Derga sustained a serious wound and died in route to a field hospital. Corporal Derga was the first of 23 Marines and Navy Corpsmen killed in action during Lima Company’s 7 month deployment.

Corporal Derga is a great example of a hometown hero, and his life was tragically cut short. Due to this, it is my request to designate this portion of I-70 to commemorate one of Fairfield County’s bravest individuals.

Thank you once again Chairwoman Kunze and members of the committee for the opportunity to present this legislation to you today. I will be glad to answer any questions at this time.