

Ohio House Transportation Committee

Testimony in Support of HB 584 Geauga County “Veterans Legacy Highway”

Mr. Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide an endorsement for House Bill 584.

My Name is Michele Pemberton. I am an Army veteran, the Director of Geauga County Veteran Services, and the Women Veterans Liaison for the Ohio State Association of County Veteran Service Officers. It has truly been an honor advocating for and assisting my fellow brothers and sisters for the past 20 years. One of my responsibilities is to memorialize those who served before, preserve our military history, and celebrate those who will continue to serve our great Nation. This brings me to why I am here today: To endorse the dedication of 4.3 miles of Ohio State Route 44 (between US 87 and US 322) as, “**Veterans Legacy Highway.**”

Gauga County has a strong military history. From the Revolutionary War to the War on Terrorism, our men and women have proudly served their Country. Veterans played a key role in facilitating the organization of the Geauga County, and still hold key roles in our communities today.

State Route 44 runs North and South through the center of the county, stretching approximately 21.6 miles, and connecting Lake and Portage Counties. It is the major thoroughfare for many commuters; I, myself, have traveled this route for more than 20 years.

The **Geauga County Veterans Memorial** was completed in 2014 with over 15,000 names, representing residents who served from the Revolutionary War to those presently serving. Located at 12555 Ravenwood Drive, Chardon, just off of State Route 44, our Geauga Veterans Food Pantry is also located near the memorial.



This portion of State Route 44 also houses **Veterans Legacy Woods**. Purchased in 2018 by The Geauga Park District, this 180-acre golf course has been restored to a more natural state, providing more paths for our veterans and others in the community, allowing all to enjoy its tranquil beauty.

In summary, as Geauga County is currently constructing our new offices along this same corridor, renaming this section of State Route 44 “**Veterans Legacy Highway**” would appropriately reflect our eternal gratitude to our veterans, linking together our services, the Veterans Legacy Woods, and our Geauga County Veterans Memorial. I can see no better way to pay homage to our veterans than to create this lasting legacy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions if that would be appropriate.

