

To: Senator Schaffer
Senate Transportation Committee

From: Nick Garver

Date: March 1, 2022

Ref: Senate Bill 289

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill 289 and I apologize for being unable to attend in person due to work obligations.

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

Corporal Derga was my best friend in high school. We were both Pickerington Police Explorers, he was in my wedding party, and we served together as volunteer firefighters for the Basil Joint Fire District which is near where we lived at the time. Needless to say, we spent a lot of time together.

When we weren't working at our jobs, we would be at the firehouse working on a bunk room addition or whatever the fire department project of the day was; or upfitting our vehicles with sirens and warning lights, or learning the roads in the county after picking up a pepperoni and black olive pizza - while waiting patiently for the next emergency run to come in.

Dustin enlisted in the United States Marines while in high school in 1999 for a six year commitment. After 9/11 happened, it became clear that it was not "if," but "when" his unit would be called up. It was his sixth year in the Marines that his unit was activated and deployed as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. On Mother's Day we learned that he had been killed by machine gun fire while clearing a building. I had the honor of leading his motorcade to the cemetery with my police vehicle which is something I will not forget.

Dustin grew up, went to school, served his community, and is laid to rest very near the portion of Interstate 70 in Fairfield County. I think that memorializing his sacrifice on this particular roadway is well deserved and would be the most impactful roadway under the state's jurisdiction to dedicate.

Thank you once again to the committee for the opportunity to provide this testimony to you today.