

Chairman McClain, Vice Chair Ferguson and Ranking Member Grim,

It is an honor to stand before you, the sponsors of House Bill 55; Representative Beth Lear and Representative Marilyn John, as well as the House Transportation Committee.

I appreciate your time today and I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 55, to designate a portion of Ohio State Route 97 as the Firefighter Charles D. Swank Memorial Highway.

Charles D. Swank was a proud Ohioan who dedicated his life to serving others. He enlisted in the US Army in 2001 after the terrorist attacks that devastated this great nation. He served as an Infantry Sergeant and Jumpmaster in the US Army's 82nd Airborne Division. He served two tours of duty, to both Iraq and Afghanistan. He received numerous awards including a Bronze Star with distinction for Valor, for exposing himself to enemy gunfire to rescue a wounded and exposed soldier on the field of battle. Charles was honorably discharged from the US Army, and would soon become a Firefighter/Paramedic serving multiple communities within Ohio. He served the Dublin community as a career Firefighter/Paramedic with the Washington Township Fire Department. He also served as a Fire Lieutenant with the Fredericktown Community Fire District, as well as his hometown of Bellville, where he followed in the footsteps of his father and brother, volunteering as a firefighter with the Jefferson Township Bellville Fire Department. Charles was a hardworking, dedicated, effective, and reliable Firefighter who made a difference in the lives of countless Ohioans. Charles volunteered as a football coach, baseball coach and strength and conditioning coach in his community, where he helped to develop the next generation. Charles always found a way to serve; a way to make a lasting impact on those

communities and everyone who knew him. Charles was the type of person who never sought recognition for his hard work. He was the type of Ohioan who deserves eternal recognition. On December 8th, 2022. Charles tragically passed away serving in the line of duty after attending a fire training class in Pensacola, Florida. He left behind his wife Alaina and five children, Jaxon, Kasey, Haylee, Trey and Troy. He departed this world a far better place than when he found it, just 39 short years prior.

The Clear Fork Valley is a tightknit community with the portion of Ohio 97 connecting the two villages of Bellville and Butler, of which Charles was proudly a lifelong resident.

I believe the passing of House Bill 55, designating the “Firefighter Charles D. Swank Memorial Highway” is a fitting, permanent commemoration of a truly remarkable Ohioan who dedicated his life of service to making this state and its communities safer to work in, to live in and to visit. His legacy is truly inspiring. With the passing of this bill, his name and legacy will be visible to countless people who pass through the place that this hero called “Home.” It is my hope that this Bill will become law with the support of each and every legislator who will cast a vote.