

To Chairman Shannon and Committee Members,

I am writing in **opposition** to the passage of **HB 4337**.

In 2021, legislature was able to approve House Bill 4735 of the 101st Legislature to establish a memorial highway for Ensign Francis Flaherty. This bill designated a portion of highway M-50 in Eaton County beginning at the intersection of highway M-50 and highway I-69 and extending west to the intersection of highway M-50 and Courthouse Drive to be known as the "Ensign Francis Flaherty Memorial Highway".

Francis C. Flaherty died in the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. The order was given to abandon ship, but Flaherty used his flashlight as a guide for his shipmates, so they could escape the capsizing ship.

Flaherty and 428 other men were entombed in the Oklahoma, which was raised in 1943. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for helping his shipmates escape the USS Oklahoma. All remains from the USS Oklahoma were interred in a mass grave of the "Unknowns" at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii. In recent years the Department of Defense attempted to identify the remains of those unknown using modern DNA matching and other scientific techniques, and on November 1, 2019, Flaherty's remains were identified.

On August 21st, 2021, members of the Charlotte community came together to welcome home Ensign Francis Charles Flaherty with a ceremony, burial, and flyover to commemorate Ensign Flaherty.

HB 4735 of the 101st Legislature was signed into law on July, 29th, 2021, and the memorial highway signs for Ensign Flaherty were installed on M-50 in Charlotte shortly thereafter, and before the ceremony.

Due to the nature of the initial signs being funded by local veteran groups and community stakeholders, and the sentimental value behind the initial sign unveiling, ceremony, and preparation by the Charlotte and Mid-Michigan community to honor Ensign Flaherty in August of 2021, HB 4337 should not be moved to the floor for consideration.

Below are photos of the existing sign and pictures from the August 21st, 2021 ceremony.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenden Allen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brenden Allen

