

Written Proponent Testimony

Mrs. Savannah Lohn

House Bill 158

05/23/2017

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Lanese, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the committee. I thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of HB 158.

My name is Savannah Lohn and I have been a military spouse for the last 15 years. My active duty husband and I have relocated a total of 6 times at this point. At each assignment I have had the opportunity to eventually find great employment. And each time, I have had to resign from my position due to Permanent Change of Station orders. Thankfully, each state, thus far, has offered military spouses resigning for the sole purpose of accompanying an active duty spouse to their next duty location unemployment benefits. This has meant stability for my family. Relocating from state to state is stressful enough by itself. Finding housing, good schools, good daycare, settling the children into a new life, all while trying to find a good paying job are all apart of each move. The unemployment benefits have been very helpful during this transition time for our family.

When we arrived here to Ohio, I had resigned from my federal position at Randolph AFB. Luckily, I qualified for unemployment benefits through the state of Texas. Arriving in February, I began my job search even prior to our arrival. I flew to Ohio for an interview (out of my own pocket) a few months before we arrived, hoping to transition into a new position with no gap in employment. However, that position was not meant to be. It took me 5 months after our arrival to find a new position. I did not have to worry about our finances during this time. The unemployment benefits I received helped with a few expenses we had and helped me to get the children into activities to help them meet new children. While this may seem small, it is vital for military children when relocating to establish routines and help them meet new friends. And while my husband and I plan well ahead and establish a savings account for emergencies, it is great not having to utilize those resources during each PCS. Rather we can save our emergency fund for true emergencies that may arise.

Sadly, Ohio is 1 of just 3 states remaining that have still chosen to not grant unemployment benefits of some kind to military spouses resigning due to PCS orders. I believe that most states have realized that a spouse resigning due to military orders is through no fault of his/her own and therefore should qualify for unemployment benefits. In the Presidential Proclamation for Military Family Month, 2016, former President Barack Obama said it best when he said, "Our military would not be the greatest in the world without the strength and support of the loved ones who stand alongside our men and women in uniform. While our service members are fighting to secure the values we cherish and defend our homeland, their spouses keep their households running, sometimes through multiple deployments. Spouses of those in the military are often forced to relocate across our country or around the globe, leaving behind jobs they love and sometimes struggling to find new employment. They are our fellow citizens and neighbors; in their service to their families and their country, they represent the true strength of America." He further said, "let us thank them for their tremendous devotion to duty and for their unyielding sacrifice. Let us honor their resolve and patriotism and uphold our solemn responsibility to ensure the priorities of our Nation reflect the priorities of our military families."

My story is just one of many and that is why I urge you to pass House Bill 158 and to prove to military spouses stationed in Ohio that this state supports their many sacrifices. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,



Savannah Lohn