

Disabled American Veterans, Department of Ohio
Proponent Testimony for Continued Budget Appropriations
Presented by Ken Marcum, State Adjutant
February 21, 2017

Chairman McColley, Ranking Minority Member Reece, and members of the Transportation Subcommittee of the House Finance Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to speak today, as well as to provide written testimony in support of the budget proposals laid out in House Bill 49 – specifically, we enthusiastically support the proposed reforms of how veterans organizations receive funds through the budget bill. **It is our firm belief that the new process put forward by Ohio Department of Veterans Services will ensure the funds amplify valuable service work performed by Veterans Organizations, while introducing greater transparency and accountability for Ohio's taxpayers.**

Disabled American Veterans (DAV), founded in 1920, is a nationally recognized non-profit charity that provides a lifetime of support for Veterans of all generations, and their families, in positive, life-changing ways. Here in Ohio, our State Department Service Officers and supporting staff has helped countless thousands of disabled veterans gain access to earned benefits and important resources. We have over 77 affiliated DAV Chapters throughout Ohio that provide local assistance with claims and transportation services. As a direct result of our service programs, over \$16 million dollars in retroactive benefits were returned to Ohio Veterans and their families in calendar years 2015-2016, in the form of compensation.

Until every Veteran in Ohio is connected to the resources and benefits they have earned for their military service the funds at issue here should be focused to that end. Currently, you, the General Assembly and Ohio taxpayers, cannot be assured that is the case. There is great interest and concern among Veteran Organizations that funding remains available for years to come. If that is to be the case, it is in our best interest to ensure the funds we receive remain above reproach; that you and the taxpayers remain confident they are being used for the right reason ---to improve the lives of Ohio's Veterans by connecting them to VA, workforce development, and other meaningful resources.

Though the amount scheduled for DAV is a miniscule sum in the grand scheme of the total State Budget, it is immensely impactful for those of us who use it for service work. Last year, for every \$1 the state provided to DAV, we returned \$29 in federal resources for Veterans. We support the proposed reforms put forward by ODVS because they will permit us to grow the federal return-on-investment, and we have no doubt it will produce the same effect for our fellow Veterans Organizations.

On behalf of DAV and the Veterans we serve, thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, for allowing me to offer proponent testimony in support of the Veterans Organization funding provision in HB49. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.