

## **SB 77 Proponent Testimony**

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Chairman Perales, Vice Chair Hood, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of Senate Bill 77. I am Cassie B. Barlow, Colonel (retired), United States Air Force. I am also the Interim President at the Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education. I write to you today in both of my roles – retired AF member and former Commander of Wright Patterson AFB from 2012-2014 and workforce development professional.

My family and I were honored to serve our country for 26 years, moving 13 times to different locations all around the world. My service was an incredible honor and privilege and I would go back and do it all again, if asked. When I served, I was one of very few women in the military which made my service even more special.

Throughout my time in the US Air Force, I really came to appreciate all the women who came before me to pave the way for women's service. Women began serving as early as the Revolution War, although they served by hiding their gender during this conflict. As women's service became more accepted in conflicts after the Revolutionary War, women also had the opportunity to contribute in many additional ways.

During my time in the military, I was lucky enough to serve as a fellow squadron commander with the first female fighter pilot squadron commander and the first female 4 star general. I've subsequently witnessed the first female surgeon general in the Air Force as well as the first female Army Ranger graduate. These are all moments of great celebration for women, as we desire to serve right next to our male counterparts for the country that we love.

The opportunity to celebrate Women Veterans Day in Ohio is extremely exciting. I see this as an opportunity to celebrate the many accomplishments of Women throughout their time of service in the military.

This bill is also another way that Ohio can show its appreciation for our Veterans that choose to make Ohio home or that are contemplating making Ohio their home. When military members retire or choose to separate from the military, they have a choice on where to settle. The appreciation shown for Veterans is a critical determinant for this decision.

Chairman Perales, Vice Chair Hood, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 77.