

Testimony of LCDR Matthew Dahm
In Support of HB 428

Chair Perales, Vice Chair Hood, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the committee. I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 428.

My name is LCDR Matthew Dahm and I have been a resident of the State of Ohio since 2010. Since becoming a Commissioned Officer in the USPHS in 2013 stationed at the Centers for Disease Control National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Cincinnati as a research industrial hygienist. In this role I have been conducting research on workplace exposures to nanomaterials in the plastics, electronics, composites, and rubber industries. As a Commissioned Officer I have also been deployed to West Africa, Sierra Leone during the Ebola Epidemic in 2014 for 60 days. During my deployment I provided training on infection prevention and control to staff at Ebola Treatment Centers and local hospitals. I am recently deployed to the CDC's Emergency Operations Center for the COVID-19 response. In this role I have served as a safety officer at the Newark International Airport Quarantine Station in February. I was in charge of worker safety at the quarantine station which was charged with conducting the screening of international passengers. I was tasked with developing standard operating procedures for how to safely handle potential passengers suspected of having COVID-19. I have since been serving as a team lead in the Worker Safety and Health Task Force within CDC's incident management structure. In this role I have assisted in developing CDC's Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers as well as the guidance for Critical Infrastructure Workers. I also address public inquiries from individuals and businesses regarding questions on COVID-19 related to workers safety and health.

I am writing this testimony in support of HB 428 which authorizes counties that establish a veterans' identification card program to issue veterans identification cards to individuals who have served with the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The USPHS Commissioned Corps consists of approximately 6,700 officers ranging in rank from ensign to vice admiral, including physicians, nurses, engineers, dentists, veterinarians, allied health professionals, environmental health specialists, pharmacists, dietitians, physical therapists, and scientists. Like our colleagues in the armed branches of the uniformed services, we are often called upon to put our lives at risk in order to protect the safety and health of American citizens. For instance, Public Health Service Officers are frequently deployed to respond domestically and internationally to infectious disease threats like SARS, Ebola, Zika, and cholera, to name a few. Just like our armed colleagues, Public Health Service Officers respond to national crises like hurricanes, biological attacks, floods, acts of terrorism and other national crises. Public Health Service Officers have served alongside our Armed Services comrades in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, onboard the USNS Mercy off the coast of Indonesia, and elsewhere around the world. In Ohio, Public Health Service Officers work at the CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the Food and Drug

Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency, in Cincinnati; the Federal Correctional Institute in Elkton; at Wright-Patterson Medical Center in Fairborn; and at the 9th District Coast Guard Headquarters in Cleveland.

Most recently, we members of the USPHS Commissioned Corps have been called to serve our country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, we have established medical stations to assist in response in New York which represent 1,000 of the 2,500 hospital beds at the Javits Center in Manhattan. Alongside Army medical personnel, HHS medical professionals—members of the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps and the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS)—are now providing care at this field hospital. Additionally, the Commissioned Corps have developed COVID-19 Clinical Strike Teams, which include officers from the variety of disciplines needed on the frontlines: physicians, nurses, pharmacists, case managers, mental health specialists, and leadership and support staff. This kind of ready-made unit allows the Commissioned Corps to be a “cavalry” that supports healthcare systems under stress in states across the country.

In short, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I support HB 428 which would place NOAA and USPHS officers in parity with our colleagues by treating all Uniformed Services Veterans equally in terms of Veterans ID cards. I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony and I hope you will favorably consider HB 428.

Very Respectfully,

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