



DoD-State Liaison Office

**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
(MILITARY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY)**

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**Testimony Before
Ohio House Health Committee Regarding House Bill 287
Developmental Disabilities Administration and Ohio Medical Assistance Program
for Services – Military Families**

By James D. Rickel

September 17, 2019

Honorable Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of policy language represented in House Bill 287 sponsored by Representatives Russo and Perales. This language will allow Service Members and their families to retain their eligibility for and receipt of Developmental Disabilities Administration and Ohio Medical Assistance Program services.

My name is James D. Rickel, retired Navy Command Master Chief and now the Department of Defense (DOD) Central Region Liaison for eight states, working for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy.

We have found that individual state Medicaid eligibility requirements, and lengthy waiting lists, hinder military families from obtaining supplemental support services for their children with special needs. This is especially true when they are transitioning out of the military with potentially uncertain medical coverage and gaps in services.

States can assist separating Service members and their families by recognizing that the mobile military lifestyle hinders reasonable participation in state Medicaid options and waiver programs. States can allow active duty Service members to use their state of legal residence (i.e. where they pay taxes, vote, register their vehicles, hold a driver's license, etc.) to register their special needs family members for a Medicaid waiver.

- Enrollment for waivers in their resident state would allow the family members to progress along with other state citizens until they become eligible to receive benefits.
- Eligibility status is retained as long as the member maintains the state as his/her legal resident and returns to the state after military separation. The member either receives credit for time on the list or begins receiving benefits when they return home.

The policy as represented in HB 287 would help those families by enabling them to earn the same priorities afforded to every state resident, requiring them to apply for services. We would also expect the Service member to maintain current contact information while out of state on military orders.

We believe this initiative is fiscal neutral in that the eligible family member would only receive those services for which they would be otherwise eligible had they remained in the state.

Since our introduction and advocacy of this issue back in 2014, 34 states have begun providing this opportunity to our military families. Another 3 states have legislation pending in this session including Ohio.

In conclusion, we are not asking to create a special group of people in this effort. We are asking the state to maintain the benefits extended to all qualified residents, but enable those residents in the military to maintain their earned eligibility status in Ohio and be eligible for services when transferring into the state of Ohio when they were receiving services in their previous state. The Department requests that you allow these families to apply for benefits in the same manner as any other resident of the state, without priority processing, without special benefits, and without any special treatment to convey a perceived privilege.

We thank Representatives Russo and Perales for sponsoring this initiative. Thank you for taking up this issue in the Ohio House of Representatives and for your consideration.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

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