

HB 16 Proponent Testimony

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Chairman Keller, Vice Chair Riedel, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the House Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of House Bill 16. 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. During our time in the military, we watched college-aged military family members travel to colleges in states different from where their families were stationed, so they could “go home” to receive in-state tuition. This separation was always a challenge for military families, both financially and mentally. This is a common practice in the military culture, to enable military families to save money. We also watched military members choose to attend online schools because the local schools didn’t recognize them as residents.

Imagine the impact on Ohio of having thousands of family and military members stay in and move to our state for college versus leaving the state. This is an annual impact I can’t begin to estimate, and just continues to expand on an annual basis. The schools in Southwest Ohio have a 7.3 billion dollar impact on the region every year; and Wright Patterson AFB, the Dayton VA and Springfield AFB Base have a 16.68 billion dollar impact; this initiative will boost this impact.

In addition, this benefit for military members and veterans is just one more benefit that will attract military members and veterans to live in the state of Ohio. Educational benefits are the second highest reason why people choose to relocate to a specific location after they separate or retire.

The talent war across the country is becoming more and more intense. Ohio must figure out ways to stand out among many other states who have great jobs to offer. One way to stand out is to become the prime location for Veterans. It goes without saying that Veterans bring many skills and talents to their companies after they retire or separate. Ohio must do everything it can to compete for this prime talent.

Chairman Keller, Vice Chair Riedel, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the House Higher Education Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 16. I am happy to take any questions.