

Chair Keller, Vice Chair Riedel, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the committee,

Good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to testify today in strong support of HB 16.

My name is Steve Johnson and I am the President of Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio. At 132 years Sinclair is America's oldest community college, with a history of serving the nation's defense, and military families, for well over 100 years. Sinclair's service to the military predates the creation of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (of which we share the same "backyard"), Wright-Patt being America's largest standalone Air Force Base and the largest single site employer in Ohio.

HB 16 makes sense for Ohio's military connected families, for the State as a whole, and I hope it serves to start a larger conversation across the State about how Ohio's military assets and identity can serve as an economic engine and a differentiator for our state economy.

Caring for our military, veterans, and their families is a part of our college and community identity.

Providing high quality and affordable higher education and workforce training is our mission and so this legislation, which conveys a richly deserved benefit onto our military, veterans, and their dependents, is a natural fit for us because it makes our services easier to access to those who need them.

At Sinclair, we are very proud to serve our very large military connected population.

- In 2018, Sinclair served 2,338 students who were military affiliated, which is the among the largest amount in Ohio (if not the most).
- Sinclair has more students using the Ohio War Orphan Scholarship than any other community college in Ohio.

- Sinclair has the second most students using the Ohio National Guard Scholarship of any community college in Ohio.
- Sinclair has the most students in Ohio of any community college and the second most of any institution using Tuition Assistance.

These exemplars are presented to establish that fact that there is much need, that we are working to fulfill that need, and that HB 16 is the right thing to do in the context of this need.

I congratulate Representative Rick Perales for his focus on this critical issue and on this important population. Those who have signed up to protect the American dream, and those who love them, are the most deserving of all of us to experience that American dream through the power of a high-quality and affordable higher education.

Thanks to the sacrifices of our military and their families, the American dream is alive and well in the hallways and classrooms of Ohio's community colleges. This legislation is a common-sense way to ensure that this special population gets a richly deserved chance to improve their lives. It also makes sense from a future focused perspective for Ohio as a whole.

Governor DeWine, Lt. Governor Husted, Chancellor Gardner, and new cabinet directors Joe Zeis and J.P. Nauseef all know the special importance of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and the opportunity it provides our state as an economic driver. I think an underutilized resource for Ohio moving forward is to retain, retrain, and empower military personnel, veterans, and their families. Good work, such as this legislation, has gone into this effort but more work is needed.

Frankly, this population has special needs and special skills that our state needs and has access to special benefits (that are very well earned) such as the GI Bill. I would welcome the opportunity to work with with the wrap around services they need and deserve. I view this bill as a great step in the right direction and look forward to working further with all of you in the future.

Thank you again for this opportunity and for considering this critical legislation. I welcome any questions you might have.