

Standing Committees

Armed Services and Veterans Affairs – Chair
House Finance
Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
Higher Education



Special Committees

Aerospace and Aviation Technology – Chair
Joint Legislative Veterans Caucus – Chair
Third Frontier Commission Advisory Board
Latino Affairs Commission

State Representative Rick Perales

Ohio's 73rd House District: Western Portion of Greene County

House Health Committee

House Bill 287 – Military Medicaid Waivers

Sponsor Testimony

10 September 2018

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Hackett, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding House Bill 287 alongside my joint sponsor, Representative Russo.

I echo all of my joint sponsor's comments, and share in her passion on this critical subject concerning our military families. For those of you who have had the honor of wearing our nation's uniform, you know first hand how the service affects our families. The Department of Defense does a tremendous job of supporting the dependents of service members; however, there remains significant challenges when it comes to transitioning to new duty stations, or when our service members end their military service. This bill would ensure that military families receive the critical supplemental support for their dependents [TRICARE] with special needs during these transition periods.

I have discussed the merits of this bill at length with Colonel Mike Foutch, Commander of the 88th Medical Group at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. He and his staff report that between 10-15 of the nearly 150 families that PCS to and

from Wright Patterson Air Force Base each year would become immediately eligible for Medicaid support should House Bill 287 pass and become law. Colonel Foutch provided one example of how House Bill 287 could make a difference. An inbound Active Duty member coming from Virginia has a special needs child. The child was receiving 86 hours of skilled nursing care, to include time while at school – covered predominantly by Medicaid in Virginia. The medical staff at Wright Patterson believe Ohio Medicaid would cover a similar benefit, but he will have to re-apply for Medicaid support, and enter a wait list period of up to 2-3 years to receive approval for coverage. The Active Duty member is now being forced to decide to 1) leave his dependents at the previous duty station with the current quality care, 2) come to Ohio with their family and receive reduced benefits (i.e. the child will no longer be able to attend school without support), or 3) look for other options to provide appropriate care out of pocket. This simply should not happen; Ohio should never put our service women and men in the position of having to decide between reducing medical services or leaving their loved ones behind. House Bill 287 would positively affect this family and approximately 15 other military families each year by immediately allowing them to qualify and receive appropriate services for their special needs dependents.

This bill is a simple addition to our current Medicare waivers to ensure we as a state are taking care of those who have sacrificed for our freedom and

security. The issue is one of the Top 10 Key Issues of the Office of Military Community and Family Policy under the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense. I have worked with their liaison to the Midwest, Mr. Jim Rickel, for the last three general assemblies [will be returning on November 6th] to bring forward quality of life legislation. As Representative Russo indicated, this is the DOD's second highest priority on that list.

With House Bill 287, Ohio has an opportunity to maintain and enhance its status a military-friendly state and have a leg up over states without Medicaid waivers for military families with special needs dependents. As we discovered from the BRAC Task Force endeavor last year, and as was related to me by the then Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson, these types of military quality of life issues are becoming more important factors in basing decisions and mission realignments. We as a legislature should ensure that Ohio is competitive in every category for potential mission and base expansion opportunities, and prevent the all too common occurrence of families becoming separated due to healthcare constraints.

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Hackett, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding House Bill 287. Representative Russo and I look forward to answering your questions.