

**House Bill 287 Proponent Testimony**  
**Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid**  
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Steve Tugend  
Chair, Central Ohio Defense Group  
Attorney at Law, Kegler, Brown, Hill + Ritter Co., L.P.A.

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Hackett, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony about House Bill 287. My name is Steve Tugend, I chair the Central Ohio Defense Group and am an attorney at Kegler Brown Hill + Ritter. I offer this testimony as a proponent of House Bill 287 sponsored by Representatives Russo and Perales.

The Central Ohio Defense Group is an organization comprised of government, nonprofit and corporate members who are concerned about preserving and growing defense-related jobs in the Central Ohio Region. The members of the group include One Columbus, the City of Columbus, the Columbus Partnership, the Columbus Regional Airport Authority, the City of Canal Winchester, Battelle, the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, the City of Whitehall, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, The Ohio State University, Franklin County, and Kegler, Brown, Hill + Ritter.

The impact of Ohio's Department of Defense (DoD) employers in our region is significant. The DoD payroll for about 14,000 jobs is just under \$800 million annually and this yields an economic impact of about \$3 billion.

And we need to be vigilant in our protection of these jobs and resulting economic impact. Every few years, the Department of Defense undertakes a process known as Base Realignment and Closure (or "BRAC") where the country's military installations are evaluated using a cost benefit analysis. Those installations that score well are kept open or even expanded. Those that score poorly are closed. It has been since 2005 since the Pentagon last went through a BRAC process, so we believe that the next one is long overdue.

Increasingly, the Pentagon has indicated that one of the key evaluation criteria that will be considered in the next round of BRAC will be how military-friendly the installation's state laws are.

It is for this reason that the Central Ohio Defense Group is interested in House Bill 287. In short, the legislation, if it becomes law, will make Ohio a more military-friendly state and, as a result, a more attractive site for military missions and jobs.

House Bill 287 requires each home and community-based services Medicaid waiver component to reserve a portion of the participant capacity for eligible individuals whose spouse, parent, or legal guardian is an active duty military member who recently transferred to Ohio. It would ease the process for the families of active duty military service members in Ohio to receive Medicaid home and community-based services waiver program benefits. Currently, these families often sit

on long waiting lists and may not receive the benefits by the time the military service member is transferred to another state, thus experiencing a gap in a service they are qualified to receive in other states. We appreciate the commendable sacrifices that our brave service men and women make, as well as their family members, having to move around the country and military bases around the world on a frequent basis.

While it may seem that this legislation only impacts a small number of people focusing on military families that have family members with special needs; this bill will go a long way in helping these families who, while doing their best to serve our country, are also making choices between keeping their family together or separating to maintain necessary health care support. Lowering this burden will in turn help with troop readiness and retention by not having to forego critical support services for family members with disabilities or paying significant amounts of medical expenses out-of-pocket to maintain these services.

From my experience, the importance of the BRAC process necessitates that our state ensure that its military facilities have both the physical and legal infrastructure that is supportive of military missions. This proposed legislation advances that goal. The U.S. Department of Defense is more likely to locate military installations and maintain them in states that are supportive of those who have worn our country's uniform.

This bill helps those in the military and their families save money on medical expenses and prevent gaps in health coverage for family members with special needs. It is my understanding that Medicaid waiver reciprocity legislation is #2 on the Pentagon's Top Ten Key Personnel and Readiness Issues for State Legislatures. This legislation represents an opportunity to build upon Ohio's state-military partnership to remove unnecessary barriers and significantly improve the quality of life for military families. In turn, Ohio will be more strategically positioned to attract and retain defense-related jobs and to protect the state's military installations.

Chair Huffman and members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.