



**Senator Sandra Williams
21st Ohio Senate District**

Committees:

- Public Utilities – Ranking Member
- Ways and Means – Ranking Member
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Insurance and Financial Institutions
- Finance Subcommittee on Higher Ed - Vice Chair

**Senate Bill 116 Sponsor Testimony
House Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security Committee
May 23, 2018**

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Kick, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the House Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 116.

Our service members sacrifice a lot to keep our communities and country out of harm's way, but their families continue to pay a steep price. When service members get a permanent change of station they must relocate their families creating multiple challenges for their spouse, especially when the move is across state lines. Active duty military personnel move on average once every two to three years which can place an extreme burden on employment, childcare, and family wages. In order to care for their families military spouses must often leave employment or have to stay separated from their spouse in order to stay employed and meet economic needs.

Senate Bill 116 will help alleviate some economic concerns by allowing military spouses to be eligible for unemployment compensation benefits if they must discontinue their employment to accompany the military member to whom they are married. Not only is this policy endorsed by multiple veteran's organizations, but is also supported by the US Department of Defense and the Ohio National Guard.

Military spouses' limited careers options have far-reaching consequences as 74% have children age 18 and under at home that depend on these spouses to perform double-duty as both caretakers and wage earners. Unemployment among spouses of servicemen is unusually high compared to the national average as military spouses are reported to have a 23% unemployment rate, roughly 4 times the general unemployment rate. The combined burdens of unemployment and parenting responsibilities create an unnecessary penalty on the families of those who are making sacrifices to keep us safe.

Compared to the rest of the nation Ohio is falling behind by not providing unemployment benefits for military spouses, as forty-six states and the District of Columbia already have policy in place to provide assistance. In order to show that Ohio honors those who are sworn to serve our nation we must attempt to support their families and give them the proper resources they need to survive.

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Kick, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the House Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security Committee, thank you for your time and I ask for your favorable consideration of passage of this legislation.