**House State and Local Government Committee**

**House Bill 133 – Military License Reciprocity**

**Sponsor Testimony**

**3 APRIL 2019**

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Ginter, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding House Bill 133. My joint sponsor, Representative Rick Perales, has already informed you as to how widespread the problems military families face with licensing reciprocity, with hundreds upon hundreds of families impacted throughout Ohio. While I am far from alone as a veteran married to a fellow former service member, my experience is unique to this body.

When my wife, Amanda, and I were stationed together at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, we were far from well off, but we were comfortable. As members of our military should be. Regrettably, many of our fellow service members were far less fortunate. Time and time again, I saw newly stationed service members struggle as their families finances were impacted by spousal unemployment. Indeed, in 2017, the Department of Defense found that a full 25% of military spouses were unemployed—more than six times higher than the national unemployment rate.

When my fellow service members’ spouses were able to find work, they were often over-qualified and under-employed. Military spouses are truly dedicated individuals, and they actually have a higher rate of educational attainment than the nation as a whole. By not supporting licensing reciprocity, we are penalizing doctors, teachers, and other in-demand professionals for their families’ commitment to serving our great nation. And we in Ohio are not paying that penalty alone. We as a nation are paying.

The cost is more than that of missed opportunities for Ohioans, it hampers the United States military readiness. Because military spouses suffer as they do, married service members’ retention rates have fallen below that of those service members who are unmarried. Too much of our top talent is being lost because the unnecessary economic stress military families face. Licensing reciprocity will help to alleviate that stress, bring in-demand professionals to Ohio, keep top talent in our military for longer, and maintain our nation’s military readiness.

There is no time like the present to act on this pressing matter.

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Ginter, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any of your questions.