******Cleveland State University**

 **Veteran & Military Resource Center**

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**Proponent Testimony on House Bill 16**

Senate Higher Education Committee

October 30, 2019

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 16 sponsored by Representative Perales. My name is Joshua Burns and I am the Director of the Veteran and Military Resource Center that supports 600+ military-affiliated students at Cleveland State University.

I enthusiastically offer support and recommend passage for HB 16. Providing in-state tuition for all military personnel and their dependents will help reduce the financial burden that higher education can often put on students and families. HB 16 is the next logical step in a series of legislative measures enacted in Ohio in recent years, to include: Ohio GI Promise, Forever Buckeye and the Guaranteed Transfer Pathways. These initiatives continue to show service-members and their families across the nation of Ohio’s commitment to serve those that serve us. Legislation like HB 16 will help to attract the best that our nation has to offer, both during service and upon reentry into civilian life.

Ohio has the sixth largest military/veteran population in the country with over 860,000 residents with current or former military experience. It is because of strategic initiatives like HB 16 that will encourage those numbers to continue to grow. In the Cleveland Metro area alone, there are over 140,000 current or former military service-members, not including their families. Cleveland is also home of the Coast Guard’s Ninth Fleet Headquarters which boasts over 6,000 personnel that live in or around Northern Ohio. The economic and cultural impact that service-members and their families can have on a community is significant and with the passage of HB 16 we have more tools to attract and retain this unique and valuable population.

As a veteran and Purple Heart recipient, I can ensure the committee that service-members seek out states and communities that understand their needs, support their sacrifice and promote their integration into the community. We are grateful for the sacrifices of our service-member and their families in supporting and defending our great country. We, again, are pleased to support HB 16 and believe that it will continue to promote and ease access to our military- friendly colleges and universities. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.