Representative Scott Wiggam

1st House District

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Loychik, and members of the House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 29.

The purpose of this legislation is to recognize members of the United States Public Health Service commissioned corps, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Space Force as veterans under Ohio Law, as they already are under federal law, and allow them to obtain state veteran ID cards. While many of us are familiar with Space Force, few of us are familiar with the Public Health Service and NOAA. In Ohio there are approximately 1000 active duty members and veterans between these two branches that are currently unable to obtain identification for their service.

While they are the smallest branches of the uniformed services, both the USPHS and NOAA each service significant tasks. The Public Health Service has been in existence since 1889 is tasked with the mission of safeguarding our national health. NOAA, in its current state, has been in existence since 1970, however its predecessor the U.S. Coast and Geodetic survey corps was in existence from 1917 to 1970 and has been tasked to understand and predict the weather for the protection of everyone. Members of USPHS and NOAA have also been tasked with taking up arms during World War II, taking on missions in both the European and Pacific theaters with tasks ranging from caring for the wounded, conducting land surveys, and forecasting the weather for military operations. While they might no longer take up arms, these members' duties have continued with over 900 officers serving alongside other branches of the military in Iraq and Afghanistan. Members of the USPHS have even served as aide-de-camps to both General MacArthur and Fleet Admiral Nimitz.

Last General Assembly this legislation pass with unanimous support in both committee and on the House floor. I respectfully ask for your support of this legislation. Thank you all for your time and I am happy to answer any questions at this time.