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Chairman Ghanbari, Vice-Chair Loychik, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for your consideration of House Concurrent Resolution No. 7. I am pleased to be here to share with you the significance of the 179th Airlift Wing of the Ohio Air National Guard (ANG) to District 02, the surrounding area, and the State of Ohio and our country.

Having served as a former commander of the 179th Airlift Wing, Assistant Adjutant General – Air/Ohio, and, after retiring from the military, the Legislative Director for the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) in Washington, DC for seven years, I am familiar with the readiness and accomplishments of the 179th, and how the federal legislative process works with respect to equipping Air Guard flying units.

The 179th has established an exemplary record of readiness and answering the call throughout its 73-year history. However, despite this record, the United States Air Force (USAF) has announced that it is planning to divest the Air Force of its legacy C-130H aircraft (which the 179th currently operates) and reduce the overall C-130 fleet to 255 aircraft by 2026, even though a United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) study in 2018 identified the need for a minimum of 300 C-130 aircraft.

In November of 2020, the Air Force announced that the 179th was one of two C-130H units (the other being Minneapolis, MN) being considered to become an Information Warfare Wing (IWW). If selected, the 179th would relinquish their eight C-130s to take on the new non-flying mission. But, if not selected and the Air Force continues with its divestment plan, the 179th could be left with no aircraft and probably forced to close which would have a significant negative impact on all who are currently serving in the unit, the community, and Mansfield Lahm Regional Airport.

The underlying reason the 179th was selected for possible transition to the non-flying IWW mission had nothing to do with its readiness or accomplishments but was based on a long-standing Air Guard policy that each state would have at least one flying unit. And, since Ohio has three flying units, including the 121st at Rickenbacker and 180th at Toledo, Mansfield became a prime candidate for divesting its C-130Hs.

It is our contention that the United States Congress should direct the USAF to maintain a minimum of 300 C-130's by either acquiring new C-130J aircraft for the ANG units with C-130H's or modernize the C-130H's for improved performance into the future. This direction should take the form of language included in the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). However, if Congress does not direct the Air Force to do the above, and the 179th is selected to take on the IWW mission, it should do so as the divestment of the legacy C-130H aircraft would most likely result in the unit closure.

Chairman Ghanbari and members of the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for your time and consideration. And I would also like to thank State Representative Marilyn John and State Senator Mark Romanchuk for their strong support and for initiating this Concurrent Resolution. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.