



## State Representative

**Allison Russo**

*Sponsor Testimony for House Resolution 382  
Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee  
November 30, 2022*

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice-Chair Loychik, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HR 382, which would recognize the month of November as Military Family Month. Thank you also to my colleague and joint sponsor, Representative Lampton, for taking on this important work with me.

A strong military relies not only on training and education to ensure readiness; it relies on strong families supporting those who fight to keep our country safe. Ohio's dedicated service members do not serve alone. Alongside them are the dedicated members of their families, whose commitment and support strengthen our nation. They are the backbone of our military. They are the quiet, but steady fuel at home that keeps the fire burning. And when their time as an actively serving family comes to an end, they support our veterans as well. It is therefore fitting that we take the time to celebrate and thank them for the support they give to our nation each day.

Officially designating November as Military Family Month would provide all Ohioans with the opportunity to honor the daily sacrifices and tremendous contribution of military families living in Ohio and around the world. Families of military service members often sacrifice a great deal personally when their loved ones are called to serve in dangerous situations and locations around the world, often for extended periods of time. Parents, siblings, spouses, and children must daily wrestle with the knowledge that their loved one is in harm's way, and often miss out on spending holidays, birthdays, and major milestones with the person they love most. If they do not have to contend with lengthy separations, then military spouses and children must learn to deal with the stress of near-constant moves: uprooting their family, putting their career on hold, and saying good-bye to friends and neighbors. On average, military families move every 2 to 3 years, and it's estimated that military children will change schools nine times between kindergarten and high school graduation. Whether it be enduring a prolonged separation from their loved one or making the necessary adjustments to new living situations and communities, military families embody the values of strength, resilience, courage, and patriotism in their daily sacrifice.

Military Family Month will be a time to honor our military families, but it will also serve as a critical reminder to all of us, here in the legislature, of the challenges our military families face and the connections to our community. We can and must do more to help our military

families overcome these challenges by making it easier for families to access educational & employment opportunities quality housing, and counseling & mental health services. Decisions we make about how to best care for these family members can have a significant impact on troop readiness and retention. Here in Ohio we have made some progress in making changes to law and supporting programs designed to better assist our military families' transition in and out of our state. Some recent examples include:

- **The Occupational Licensing Reciprocity for Military Families Act**, (SB 7, 133<sup>rd</sup> GA) signed into law January 2020, which gives military members and their spouses better employment opportunities by simplifying the process to transfer their occupational licenses to Ohio and mandating state licensing agencies to issue licenses or certificates to military members and spouses who already hold a valid license to practice a trade or profession in another state.
- HB 287, 133<sup>rd</sup> GA, signed into law June 2020, and which I was proud to sponsor provides **Medicaid waiver reciprocity for active duty family members with special needs** who move to Ohio for assignment, making it easier for military families to keep the benefits for which they already qualify.
- HB 16, 133<sup>rd</sup> GA, signed into law in June 2020, which **waives the 1-year residency requirement for active duty members and their dependents**, making them immediately eligible for in-state tuition at Ohio public universities.
- Support for **the Ohio Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission** which manages the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and assists military-connected children with enrollment and transferring credits for high school graduation. A commission that I and my joint sponsor, Representative Lampton, are proud to serve on.
- And programs like **the Purple Star Award** for schools that show a major commitment to Ohio's students in military families.

For their service to our country, taking care of our military families and honoring their sacrifice by designating November, Military Family Month, is the very least we can do.

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice-Chair Loychik, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify today in support of HR 382. Representative Lampton and I are happy to answer any questions you may have.