



OHIO

March 4, 2021

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee Subcommittee on Higher Education:

My name is Bill LaPrise and I am submitting interested party testimony today regarding House Bill 110, Ohio's biennial operating budget. I am a retired Brigadier General in the U.S. Army, and in my civilian career I served for over 30 years as a school psychologist, elementary principal, pupil services director and deputy superintendent in the Miamisburg, Ohio, City School District.

I am a proud member of Mission: Readiness, a bipartisan organization established in 2009 comprising more than 750 retired U.S. military generals and admirals. Mission: Readiness champions evidence-based, bipartisan public policy solutions proven to prepare students for life and to be able to serve our nation in any way they choose.

On behalf of my Ohio colleagues, I offer this written testimony for House Bill 110, Ohio's biennial operating budget. We thank Governor DeWine and the Ohio General Assembly for their continued support for Ohio's children.

We are gravely concerned about the future of the U.S. fighting force when, according to the Department of Defense's figures, more than 70% of young adults aged 17-24 in both Ohio and the US overall are unqualified for military service, meaning they are unable to serve in our military if they wanted to. This is due to factors ranging from poor nutrition, inadequate academic preparation, and a record of crime or drug usage.

We applaud major state initiatives of the past two years such as TechCred and Broadband Ohio. TechCred has been valuable in helping employers ensure that the workforce is equipped with the skills and credentials needed for our nation's economy and our national security.

In the Information Age, instant transmission is as important to the modern economy and the modern education system as it is to the modern military. That's why we support efforts to make high-speed internet access more affordable to everyday Ohioans and to

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extend connections to unserved and underserved areas. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ohio leaders have worked closely with Federal officials to help maintain a supply of nutritious food to children and families often lacking access outside of school.

Yet, Ohio still lags the nation in the percentage of Ohioans who have attained a high-value credential or postsecondary degree. Ohio's attainment rate of 49.2 percent is two points lower than the national average and 31st in the nation. This "skills gap" hurts Ohio in the battle to attract employers.

We also know that children are often fighting unseen battles at home and at school. Non-academic barriers frequently prevent students from being successful in school and beyond. Poor mental health can result in serious negative outcomes for the health and development of adolescents, which is why we support increased investments in K-12 Student Wellness and Success funding for the next biennium and extending these services to students in higher education.

Studies show that students who have the opportunity to learn have a better chance of achieving their goals and contributing to a stronger civilian and military workforce. That's why we support investments in building awareness about important first steps to higher education, such as completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the diversity of postsecondary opportunities available for students.

Research informs us that these efforts to increase postsecondary attainment also improve student success, preparing young adults to serve our nation in the way that they choose. Ladies and gentlemen of the subcommittee, we appreciate your time and attention to these matters that will help Ohioans succeed.

Very truly yours,

Brigadier General (Ret.) William LaPrise
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