

HB 244 Proponent Testimony

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Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of House Bill 244. I am Cassie B. Barlow, Colonel (retired), United States Air Force. I am also the President at the Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education. I write to you today in several of my roles – retired AF member and former Commander of Wright Patterson AFB from 2012-2014 and in my most important role - parent.

My family and I were honored to serve our country for 26 years, moving 13 times to different locations all around the world. What this meant for my daughter was 10 different schools in 16 years. Although we all became good at moving and locating the best schools for my daughter's educational needs, we ran into many barriers with school districts as we transferred and tried to get her into the right classes at the right time. She had to take some courses multiple times as every State is on a different curricular schedule. In addition, it would have been helpful on several moves to be able to enroll early in classes, as my daughter was forced to get caught up based upon the timing of military moves.

Most military families have no control regarding the timing of their moves. Many families must move off cycle of the typical school schedule. They do not make the choice to move at a particular time, it is a military and national security imperative that they move at these times. I served as a commander in several of my postings in the Air Force and witnessed the struggle of military families moving their children at many different times during the year and having to deal with late arrivals and the curricular catch-up game for their children. When a child is forced into this situation of having to catch up with their peers, it is very stressful on the child and on the entire family. Some students are immediately put at a disadvantage based upon their innate academic challenges or learning disabilities.

This bill is critical for military families being heartily welcomed into our state. This bill will allow military families to arrive in Ohio and immediately integrate into living, working, going to school, and playing in our State. When military children have a smooth transition, the entire family has a smooth transition – I can tell you this from first-hand experience!

When military members retire or choose to separate from the military and stay in a particular state, the benefits offered in that state are a critical determinant for this decision. Welcoming military children with open arms with laws that allow for smooth transitions is a significant benefit for military in Ohio and can help military members trying to make this important decision of where they will settle with their families.

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 244.