



**Proponent Testimony**  
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Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of two powerful Ohio workforce programs, the Defense Associated Graduate Student Innovators Program (DAGSI) and the Aerospace Professional Development Center (APDC). 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 come to you today in several of my roles – retired AF member and former Commander of Wright Patterson AFB from 2012-2014 and as a workforce professional.

My family and I were honored to serve our country for 26 years, moving 13 times to different locations all around the world. Throughout my time in the Air Force, I was an Industrial, Organizational Psychologist focused on building the next generation of workforce for our United States Air Force. When it was time to retire, I looked at the amazing opportunities in Ohio and chose wisely to settle here and to continue to focus on building the next generation of workforce, but from the perspective of the Ohio economy and our in-demand industries. The Defense Association Graduate Student Innovators (DAGSI) and Aerospace Professional Development Center (APDC) programs are two Ohio staples, that provide a pipeline for critical national defense-related research, education, and workforce. DAGSI provides competitive funding annually for over 70 graduate level, high-tech, research and education opportunities to students in Ohio research universities. These projects provide research requested by and in support of Ohio's defense industry. Through the DAGSI & APDC programs, high-tech, highly educated workers are matched with aerospace and defense positions across Ohio. APDC serves more than 6,000 high-tech job seekers with 5,550 placed into jobs annually. Together, they serve more than 220 aerospace and defense companies in addition to the Ohio federal agencies. Through a collaboration between DAGSI, APDC, and the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) they have created the first and most successful joint research and workforce development program between Ohio and the United States Air Force (USAF) that has been in existence since the early 1990s.

**I am here today to request an increase from \$1.72M/year in the current House budget to \$2.0M/year.** Full funding of this program will allow for a 30% increase in the number of students impacted annually and have a huge impact on the state by attracting new jobs and talent for the manufacturing and defense sector in Ohio.

The bottom line is that our programs have more than a \$16B economic impact in Ohio coming from our Defense and Aerospace Industry. We must continue to develop the high-tech, STEM workforce to feed this economic engine. The DAGSI & APDC programs have been filling this need for 30 years and are positioned to help Ohio move into the highly technical job market of the future. Annually, there are three times as many applicants for the DAGSI program as

available funds. Every additional student we can connect to requested research assists the defense industry and helps to make Ohio competitive. Most importantly, 70% of the DAGSI students remain in Ohio. There are no programs I know of with such a high level of retention. We hear frequently about the “brain drain” of students leaving Ohio to find high quality jobs on the coasts. DAGSI & APDC directly combat this issue by keeping the vast majority of students in Ohio.

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.