

GREENE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSONERS



10 June 2024

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Honorable members of the House Finance Committee,

I am deeply honored to advocate today for the passage of House Bill 434, The Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment Accelerator Pilot Program (TBITXL). My name is Rick Perales, and I come before you not just as a former State Representative for the 73rd district in Ohio, but also as a former Air Force Commander and a passionate advocate for our veterans.

Having served on this esteemed finance committee, I understand the weight of the decisions made within these walls. But today, we have the opportunity to make a decision that will profoundly impact the lives of our veterans and countless others affected by traumatic brain injuries (TBIs).

Concussions, once dubbed Shell Shock during the First World War, have evolved alongside the evolution of warfare. Today, their threat looms larger than ever, exacerbated by the increasing lethality of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), which unleash larger fireballs and unparalleled explosive force. While advancements in protective gear have undoubtedly preserved lives on the battlefield, many of our courageous service members now confront the grim prospect of enduring lifelong physical and cognitive impairments.

Currently, military commanders deploy the i-STAT TBI handheld assessment tool in combat zones. This groundbreaking device empowers frontline leaders to rapidly prioritize the evacuation of critically injured service members, ensuring swift access to vital medical care. Yet, despite this crucial intervention, Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs) continue to claim a staggering 42% of combat-related fatalities upon arrival at surgical wards in operating bases. It's abundantly clear: we cannot afford to overlook the pressing need for cutting-edge treatments and therapies to alleviate the devastating impact of this condition.

The aftermath of TBIs extends far beyond the battlefield. Veterans grappling with these injuries utilize healthcare services at a rate four times higher than their unaffected counterparts, imposing significant healthcare costs. Investing in the Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment Accelerator Pilot Program is not merely a moral imperative for honoring our veterans; it's also a smart economic decision for the state of Ohio. By allocating resources towards TBI research, innovation, and treatment, we can attract



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top-tier professors, researchers, and medical professionals to our state, catalyzing economic growth through job creation and bolstered tax revenue.

Moreover, positioning Ohio as a nexus for traumatic brain injury research will draw visitors nationwide to partake in conferences, workshops, and events, bolstering tourism and solidifying Ohio's standing as a frontrunner in healthcare innovation.

I urge you to seize this moment and support HB434. Let's stand united in our commitment to our veterans and all those affected by traumatic brain injuries. Together, we can make a difference and create a brighter future for Ohio. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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