



House Pensions Committee
House Bill 310 – Proponent Testimony
December 12, 2023

Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA)

Chair Mathews, Vice Chair King, Ranking Member Lightbody, and members of the House Pensions Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill (HB) 310. My name is Paul Imhoff with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators.

Our organization represents public school superintendents and other senior level school administrators from around the state. On behalf of our members, we respectfully ask this committee to support HB 310 and support our veterans who have chosen to serve in our public schools across Ohio.

I am a proud veteran of the Ohio Army National Guard and am a first-generation college graduate. I enlisted in the Ohio Army National Guard in 1987 to pay my way through college and am proud to have served in the former 166th battalion of the 73rd Brigade as an 81mm mortarman. I also want to make it clear that I would in no way benefit from HB 310 if it were to become law as I am already retired and drawing STRS benefits.

I want to thank Representative Jones for sponsoring this bill and supporting our veterans. I want to thank each of you as well for the support you show for our veterans. My testimony today is simple – providing a more affordable way for our veterans to purchase service credit from STRS so they may retire at or near the same time as their non-veteran colleagues is simply the right thing to do. Those who delay entry into their educational career to serve their country should not be burdened with exorbitant costs to later purchase those years of service.

I understand several legitimate and reasonable questions have been posed when discussing this bill and I would like to discuss a few of those. First, there is the concern that changing this calculation would create an unfunded liability for the pension system. While this is correct, the cost would be reasonable because the number of veterans in the system, while not known exactly, is not expected to be high. And most importantly, this change is the right thing to do for our veterans.

The second comment that has been made is that veterans could have avoided the exorbitant cost if they had simply purchased their years of service earlier in their career. This comment does consider two very important factors: First, the years of service and age for full retirement eligibility have recently changed, meaning those who had not previously considered purchasing service credit are now in a position where that will be disadvantageous. The second comment does not consider the financial status of many young teachers, especially those who have served in the military. Even the less expensive cost of purchasing

service credit in these early years is often out of reach. When I was a new teacher, I had a small amount of military service I was eligible to purchase due to the portion of my service in the National Guard that occurred prior to beginning my teaching career. I was young, newly married, and we quite simply did not have the resources to fund that expenditure. By the time I was older and was in a more secure financial position, the cost of purchasing that time had become much too high. I fear my story is common.

I appreciate your attention to this bill, and I appreciate your due diligence in considering all aspects of this bill. I ask you to support our veterans and provide future incentives for other young people to continue to serve their country and then continue their service with a commitment to education in the great State of Ohio.

Chair Mathews and members of the committee, this concludes my testimony. Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer your questions.