

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Merrin, Ranking Member Troy, and all honorable members of the House Ways & Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony on HB 126. I regret that I could not attend the hearing in person, but mission requirements prevent me from traveling to Columbus.

I am an active duty commissioned officer in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) with 21 years of service as an engineering officer. I encourage your support of HB 126. Parity in Ohio law among all eight United States Uniformed Services (the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Space Force, Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps) is important to me. Our Uniformed Service has a long history dating back to 1798, and modern day USPHS Commissioned Corps Officers still serve on the frontlines in the fight against disease and poor health conditions. During my USPHS career, I have responded to tuberculosis outbreaks at homeless shelters, food packing plants, and on a cruise ship. I was sent to Guyana, South America to evaluate mercury contamination and removal systems at several mine assay facilities at the request of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Recently, I was sent to investigate an ongoing blastomycosis outbreak at a paper mill in Michigan. USPHS officers routinely deploy domestically and internationally to address public health concerns.

USPHS officers often serve alongside our sister Uniformed Services and should be recognized for the vital role we play in the Nation's health and national security. Earlier in my USPHS career, I collaborated with the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command on several projects to reduce exposure to hazardous air contaminants during aircraft painting operations at the North Island Naval Air Station and at the Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. In 2020, USPHS officers were sent to several military bases in California that evacuated US citizens from Wuhan, China. In recent years, USPHS officers also supported other DoD led missions such as Operation Allies Welcome.

I currently reside in Mason, Ohio which has a municipal income tax rate of 1.12%. Passing of HB 126 will assist us in recruiting and retaining USPHS officers in Ohio so that we can continue protecting, promoting, and advancing the health and safety of the Nation. Thank you for your consideration; please feel free to contact me if I can provide further assistance or answer any questions.

Sincerely,

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