



**Testimony for House Bill 250**

**State Representative Tracy Richardson, District 86**

**Education Committee**

**January 23, 2024**

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Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 250 with my joint-sponsor Representative Miranda.

House Bill 250 is truly straight forward. It renames the "Military Enlistment Seal" on the high school diploma as the "Military Seal". It also expands eligibility for the seal to ensure that every high school graduate who is willing to serve our nation can receive this honor on their diploma. This is an important bill that corrects an oversight and ensures parity for the graduates entering United States Military Service Academies including the Army, Air Force, Navy, Merchant Marine, and Coast Guard Academies. All university or college ROTC applicants accepted into those programs will also be eligible.

As many of you know, I am currently a member of the United States Armed Forces and serve on the admissions team for the United States Military Academy, West Point. In this capacity, I have the honor of meeting some of the talented and impressive students from Ohio, who are appointed to our academies. In the past, I also taught ROTC, otherwise known as the Reserve Officer Training Corp, and worked with the remarkable men and women who have chosen to participate and to serve as cadets. These students have shown readiness and preparedness for their futures and the next steps after high school.

It is important that ALL qualified students have the chance to receive a graduation seal. Currently, only those enlisting in the Armed Forces or those who have been in Junior ROTC are eligible. House Bill 250 ensures students appointed to the academies and those admitted to

ROTC can graduate with a seal. They are not limited because of an oversight that occurred when creating the requirements for the Military Seal.

Again, the point of this legislation is parity. The bill renames and expands eligibility for the seal to students receiving appointments to Military Service Academies and ROTC scholarships because they have demonstrated similar readiness and preparedness for their futures. These soon to be graduates have shown academic excellence, physical aptitude, leadership skills, and most importantly, character and motivation. I would be remiss if I didn't also suggest that access to a graduation seal following a commitment to joining our Armed Forces is a source of encouragement to join our military. It incentivizes service to our great country.

Chairman Brenner and all members of the Committee, please join me in supporting students. Expanding the eligibility for the Military graduation seal will ensure ALL students who have committed to serving in our Armed Forces receive the recognition they deserve. I sincerely thank you for your thoughtful consideration of H.B. 250.