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**OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500**

April 9, 2024

**Senator Andrew Brenner
Chair, Ohio Education Committee**

**Remarks of Shane Preston
Great Lakes Region Liaison**

United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office

Support of: SB 208 Open Enrollment for Military Families.

Testimony

Chairman Brenner and honorable Committee members, the Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to support the policies reflected in SB 208. This legislation would have Ohio adopt an education policy that truly supports military families with increased flexibility via open enrollment.

My name is Shane Preston. I am the Great Lakes Region Liaison at the United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. We represent the Department and establish relationships with state leaders across the country who are concerned for troops and their families' welfare by harmonizing state and federal law and regulation on policy problems of national significance. These are identified by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, and the National Guard Bureau as areas where states can play a crucial role.

Military families are at a disadvantage when it comes to enrollment options available to their children, due to the timing of military directed moves. Military families move frequently and change school systems upwards of ten times prior to graduation. In addition to planned Permanent Changes of Station (PCS) moves across state lines, military families often must experience additional subsequent relocations from temporary to permanent housing due to limited availability of military or community housing at the time of their arrival.

SB 208 expands on previous efforts of the state to support military families by creating an exception for military families dealing with the districts that prohibit open enrollment or only accept open enrollment of students from neighboring districts. This limited exception requires these districts to allow a student who is not a native student to still enroll in the district if one or both student's parents are an active-duty member of the United States Armed Forces and stationed in Ohio. To use this policy, the parent(s) furnish a copy of official orders verifying the

parent's status as an active-duty member. With approximately 10,000 active-duty service members, and 10,000 active-duty children attending school in Ohio, this committee has an opportunity to have a highly impactful positive effect on the educational experiences of military children and families.

We thank the committee for considering this important legislation and are especially grateful for the tremendous effort the Buckeye State has historically made in supporting our service members and their families. We thank the Chairman for taking up this legislation and the bill sponsor, Senator Roegner, for her past and current advocacy on behalf of military families.

Sincerely,

Shane Preston

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Great Lakes Region Liaison

Defense-State Liaison Office