

Senate Finance Committee Testimony
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Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of GRF 235508 Air Force Institute of Technology. I am Cassie B. Barlow, Colonel (retired), United States Air Force. I am also the President at the Strategic Ohio Council for Higher Education. I'm speaking to you today from the perspective of a proud Veteran, who was the Installation Commander at WPAFB, who now calls Ohio home and who has the privilege each and every day to assist in building the next generation of high-tech workforce for Ohio as the President of SOCHE.

I'd like to tell you about the impact of this long-standing budget line for the State of Ohio. The Air Force Institute of Technology budget line includes the Defense Associated Graduate Student Innovators (DAGSI) and Aerospace Professional Development Center (APDC) programs that provide a pipeline for critical national defense-related research, education, and workforce. DAGSI provides funding for over 70 graduate level, high-tech, research and education opportunities every year to students in Ohio research universities. These projects provide research requested by and in support of our military and defense partners. Through the DAGSI & APDC program, high-tech workforce are matched with high tech positions in Ohio to include Intel and Honda. APDC serves more than 6,000 high-tech job seekers with 5,550 placed into jobs annually. Together, they serve more than 220 aerospace and defense companies and Ohio federal agencies.

Through a collaboration between DAGSI, APDC, and the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) we have created the first and most successful joint research and workforce development program between Ohio and the United States Air Force (USAF), and every year, the Air Force adds dollars to its multi-million dollar commitment to this program.

Every year, DAGSI increases the pipeline of graduate research opportunities while preparing the next generation of highly technical workforce by funding at least 20 new defense research projects annually. APDC works with the aerospace and defense community in partnership with Ohio research universities to attract and connect high-tech job seekers to jobs across Ohio. Additionally, APDC educates college students on federal job opportunities here in Ohio. Both programs are highly sought out by well qualified applicants. Generally, there are five times more applicants than available funds for research projects. **70% of students whose research is funded through DAGSI choose to stay in Ohio as part of the science, technology, and defense workforce.**

Funds for this program support the USAF through the DAGSI/APDC and significantly contribute to economic development in Ohio. Programs at WPAFB (\$16.75B) and NASA Glen Research Center (\$1.8B) alone have a statewide impact of \$18.55B.

Additional beneficiaries of this program include the Department of Defense in Ohio for research and development and retention of critical high-tech workforce, faculty and graduate students at Ohio universities as well as aerospace and defense companies, job seekers, and veterans.

DAGSI/APDC programs meet the Governor's goals for the aerospace and defense industry by:

- Recruiting and retaining young talent in the STEM field (*currently 70% students stay in Ohio in high-tech, high wage jobs*)
- Attracting new jobs within the manufacturing, information technology and defense sector to the state
- Increasing Ohio's research portfolio (*currently more than 70 existing aerospace and defense research projects annually*)
- Working to support and increase the local workforce (*currently more than 5,500 tech job seekers served annually*)

Our request is to maintain the DAGSI/APDC (AFIT) line item at \$2.2M/year. This funding will allow DAGSI to increase their impact exponentially from previous years supporting the industry in Ohio creating a highly technical workforce to fill high salary jobs and matching over 6,000 high-tech job seekers to fill workforce needs. This initiative has large return by building Ohio's next generation of technical workforce and supporting companies both large and small with the high-tech workforce they need. We must continue to support and grow Ohio's aerospace, STEM, and defense industries.

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to present testimony in support of GRF 235508 Air Force Institute of Technology. I would be happy to answer any questions.