

**Brian Chavez**  
State Senator  
30<sup>th</sup> District



**Dr. Terry Johnson**  
State Senator  
14<sup>th</sup> District

**Sponsor Testimony - Senate Bill 257**  
**Ohio Senate Community Revitalization Committee**  
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Chairman Landis, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Community Revitalization Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 257.

Senate Bill 257 modifies the Ohio Homebuyer Plus program by expanding eligibility for the savings program to include active-duty military members who reside in another state but are stationed in Ohio.

Ohio Homebuyer Plus offers a significant opportunity for Ohioans to save money towards purchasing a house within the state. The program was implemented in January of this year in collaboration between the offices of Governor DeWine and Treasurer Sprague. The purpose of this program is to create specialized, tax-advantaged savings accounts to assist Ohioans on their homebuying journeys. The program allows prospective homebuyers with open accounts to access above-market interest rates and qualify for certain state income tax deductions. The Ohio Treasurer's Office reports that since the program's implementation, it has been highly successful with nearly 7,700 accounts opened and over 30 financial institution partnerships established.

Currently, to qualify for an account, the accountholder must be 18 years old, live in Ohio, and only use the account proceeds toward the down payment or closing costs of a primary residence purchased in Ohio. The Treasurer's Office recently brought an eligibility issue to our attention that we hope to address with this legislation.

Senate Bill 257, if implemented, will expand the eligibility criteria for Ohio Homebuyer Plus to allow non-resident military personnel, who are on an active-duty assignment in Ohio, to open accounts.

It is estimated that there are over 6,700 active-duty military members currently residing within our state. Often, military personnel are forced to put their lives on pause when they are away on active duty, which typically lasts between two to six years. Through Senate Bill 257, we will ensure that is not the reality for servicemen and servicewomen stationed in Ohio by encouraging them to put down roots if they fall in love with our great state.

This legislation will offer a more accessible opportunity for active-duty military members to become residents of Ohio if they wish to do so. Senate Bill 257 will ease the home buying process so that military personnel and their families can flourish through this successful program.

With our state being home to more than 800,000 military veterans, retirees, and active-duty personnel, it is essential that Ohio continues to support the armed forces as a military-friendly state. Homeownership is a goal of many Americans, and it is necessary that the Ohio Homebuyer Plus program's benefits be expanded to include the servicemen and servicewomen who make sacrifices in their lives each day protecting our nation.

Thank you to Senator Johnson and his staff for working diligently on this issue, and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for Senate Bill 257. I am happy to answer any questions.