Written Testimony Provided in Support of HB292
November 2025
Josh Prest, Eastern Ohio Military Affairs Commission

Chair Richardson, Vice-Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Lawson-Rowe and members of the Ohio House Veterans and Military Development Committee, my name is Josh Prest and I am here on behalf of EOMAC, or the Eastern Ohio Military Affairs Commission, located in Youngstown, OH. As an Ohio based organization of which I currently serve as the Executive Director, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB292, which will establish the Ohio Defense Commission and the Ohio Defense Fund.

Ohio's defense industry is vital to both our state's economy and our national security. By creating the Ohio Defense Commission, HB292 will strengthen coordination between business, the military and academia, while also investing in new facilities, supporting small businesses with defense contracts, encouraging innovation through a Defense Business Incubator and promoting research into advanced defense technologies.

EOMAC directly supports the mission at both the Youngstown Air Reserve Station and Camp James A. Garfield, both located in Northeast Ohio. YARS is the 2nd largest employer in the Mahoning Valley and will be the home to eight new C-130J airplanes, representing an $870M investment in NE Ohio. Attracting these missions and planes to Ohio is exactly the thing that the Ohio Defense Commission and Ohio Defense Fund, if enacted into law, would help support.

We commend Reps. Mathews and Santucci for co-sponsoring this important legislation that will have direct impacts on those we serve at both the Youngstown Air Reserve Station, home of the 910th Airlift Wing and the Dept. of Defense's only fixed wing aerial spray mission, as well as the Camp James A. Garfield Ohio National Guard Training Center. Rep. Santucci has been a champion for both installations and EOMAC over many years, so we are very thankful for his and Rep. Mathews' leadership on this legislation and for the defense industry across Ohio.

For organizations like ours, this bill will provide the tools needed to grow, compete and create jobs here in Ohio. I respectfully urge support for HB292 to establish the Ohio Defense Commission and the Ohio Defense Fund. Thank you again for your time today.

Sincerely,

Josh Prest
Executive Director
Eastern Ohio Military Affairs Commission