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House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Sponsor Testimony – House Bill 91
Tuesday, April 29th, 2025

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 91, which seeks to establish the Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment Accelerator Program (TBITXL). We are honored to present this legislation that will establish Ohio as a “bio hub” of neuro-innovation in hopes of improving the treatment of Ohioans who experience a traumatic brain injury.

TBITXL aims to address the dramatic, negative health impact of traumatic brain injury (TBI) on Ohioans (including 17,000+ Afghanistan/Iraq military veterans). In 2021, there were 2,914 TBI-related deaths, 11,470 TBI-related hospitalizations, and 101,176 TBI-related ED visits (Sources: ODH, BVS, and OHA). In 2021, for every 100,000 residents, there were 23 TBI-related deaths. Over the previous 10 years, TBI-related deaths increased by 29%. An estimated 1.65 million (23.2%) adults in Ohio have had at least one TBI in their lifetime. More than 1.1 million (16.2%) have had at least one TBI with loss of consciousness. Roughly 550,000 reported having a disability. In 2019-2020, 12.75% of respondents reported one or more concussions in the past 12 months (2019-2020 Ohio Healthy Youth Environments Survey). ODH Research suggests that these injuries are a leading cause of death and disability in persons under the age of 45. Ohioans incurred \$6 billion in medical expenses and missed wages in 2017 alone and experienced an increased risk of suicide.

Despite the immense human and economic toll, there are still zero FDA-approved drugs to mitigate the long-term effects of traumatic brain injuries. Without giving neurosurgeons, first responders, and physicians the tools they need to treat these conditions effectively, TBI will

continue to shift from an acute injury to a chronic, lifelong condition, leading to increased cases of seizures, strokes, dementia, and suicide.

The reality is that drug development takes decades, and one of the biggest barriers is slow funding. The NIH and DoD can take anywhere from 8 months to 2 years just to review grant proposals. HB91 is designed to break through these inefficiencies by accelerating TBI drug development programs that have been stalled by traditional funding roadblocks.

This legislation dedicates \$10 million (biennially) from the General Revenue Fund to launch the TBITXL, with the Brain Injury Research Foundation overseeing the initiative. Sustaining the 5th largest veteran population in the nation, Ohio is one of the most accessible states for research studies due to the ease of travel to Ohio's seven medical schools. Unlike traditional grant programs that distribute State resources, TBITXL multiplies funding. HB91 requires research institutions to match state grants with NIH or institutional funding, ensuring that every dollar is strategically leveraged to maximize impact. The Foundation will report directly to Ohio's Chancellor of Higher Education, and a mandatory review board and audit process will guarantee strict oversight, transparency, and accountability at every stage.

At the heart of TBITXL is The Brain Injury Research Foundation (BIRF), which serves as a scientific clearinghouse to facilitate the open exchange of ideas, data, and assets between research teams in academia and private industry. BIRF provides the infrastructure needed to coordinate data, streamline analytics, and optimize visualization tools, ensuring that every project benefits from the latest scientific insights in conjunction with *PRECEPT (Preclinical Candidate Evaluation and Screening Platform for TBIs)* and *SynapX: The First Multi-Drug Co-Development Program for TBIs*. Most importantly, every research project funded through this program will take place right here in Ohio.

Despite being the seventh-largest state by population, Ohio ranks only tenth in NIH funding. Without a structured funding platform, we are leaving millions of dollars in federal grants and private investment on the table, missing a critical opportunity to drive innovation. HB91 changes that by transforming Ohio into the nation's "bio hub" for neurotrauma drug development and ensuring that breakthroughs in TBI treatment happen here.

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, we are pleased to answer any questions. Thank you.