

My name is Michael Carrell, and I am the Chief Operating Officer for the National Veterans Leadership Foundation (NVLF). Prior to this, I was a career Air Force Officer, retiring as a Colonel and I worked at Ohio State for over a dozen years where I created, led, and oversaw the Military & Veterans Services office. I have been active in Ohio's strong efforts for military-connected students in higher education for almost 15 years. I co-chaired Ohio's Military Strategic Implementation Team (MSIT) for the Chancellor for a decade, helped draft the original House Bill 64 which was passed in 2014 to guide the creation of military offices on our campuses, and subsequently founded the Ohio Veterans Education Council (OVEC) made up of each university's military single point of contact.

I am a strong supporter of House Bill 95 as it will give resources to all member schools of the OVEC. It enables a centralized, more efficient and effective use of funds and helps resource challenged offices for a key student group--military connected students. This includes Veterans, their family members, Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve members. It gives them opportunities to act as force multipliers on their campuses to serve the greater population and ensure programs and policies are improved for all at their schools. Unlike most traditional college students, military-connected ones are overwhelmingly first-generation, are older, and just about half have a family of some sort. Having these opportunities can make the difference in their success on our campuses.

We pioneered these programs at Ohio State over 11 years and know that they work. When we started NVLF over 4 years ago, we took these programs to a variety of universities—2 and 4-year schools, urban and rural, public and private. The programs worked at every type of school because they are flexible and campus-driven. They empower military-connected students to help make the right changes at the right time on a campus in partnership with the military office and other school leaders. These programs enable the students to continue their life of service and better prepare them to transition to fulfilling careers in our communities. NVLF has previously worked with and invested their money in Ohio schools and students since day one and continues to increase that investment every year. They have also sponsored the OVEC for the past 3 years providing support and curriculum for their meetings and programming for their students and staff. This bill marks a significant investment for every OVEC school and support these offices and students on campus. Having roots in central Ohio, NVLF desires to see Ohio continue to be a leader in the higher education space for military-connected students. This includes recruitment, success in school, and in transition to employment.

Bringing these programs to Ohio schools enables the state to continue on its path as the most military focused and can help students stay in our state after graduation with their families. The proposed Military Community Advocate (MCA) program has each campus

place one student in Career Services to foster better relations between that office, military students, and employers. By centralizing efforts across the state, you receive more effective and efficient use of these resources—it builds a statewide cohort and is less than \$25,000 per participating school. That is less than half the cost of a single position at each school. These schools and students would also have access to NVLF's national network and programming.

Beyond helping their campuses and fellow military-connected students, these programs also significantly help the individual Veteran and family member. At times, it can be life changing. Let me leave you with a quote from one of the NVLF funded MCAs at an Ohio institution this year:

"I can not express my gratitude enough for the MCA program, going into my senior year, I felt defeated, exhausted and overall depressed and jaded in my academic career. When given the opportunity to change what I was seeing around me and help contribute to the solution of the problems I was pointing out, things started to change and I felt that the work I was doing was having a positive effect. The MCA program never claims that it would provide me with solutions to all my problems, but it helped me get out of a negative mindset and additionally have a better outlook on life in general. I am more than thankful for the MCA program and hope it will continue to provide opportunities to other students."

Let's bring this opportunity to every Ohio school and all the talented military-connected students studying here.