

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of House Bill 95. I speak today on behalf of Ashland University, a proud Purple Star campus with a deep and ongoing commitment to Ohio's military-connected students.

This bill represents more than just funding—it's a smart investment in the people and systems that directly impact veterans' success in higher education. HB 95 represents a meaningful investment in the success of Ohio's veterans, service members, and their families by strengthening the campus-based support systems they rely on most. These students bring leadership, discipline, and a deep sense of purpose to our classrooms. What they often lack is a clear path to navigate higher education, especially while balancing family, work, and transition challenges.

This bill helps close that gap by empowering students to serve as Military Community Advocates—peers who understand the journey and can guide others through it. That peer-to-peer model works. We've seen firsthand how it builds connection and confidence among veteran students. In addition to this, these advocates play a crucial dual role: they not only help veterans navigate the complex transition from military to civilian and academic life, but simultaneously helping campus faculty and staff better understand the unique strengths and needs of this student population.

Through daily interaction, Military Community Advocates bring forward best-practice solutions and real-time insights that shape more informed and inclusive teaching, advising, and student services. They build bridges between traditional students and veterans, easing cultural transitions and fostering respect. They also connect with community partners—like local employers, service organizations, and VA resources—so that our student veterans are supported both on and off campus.

It also provides tools colleges truly need: staff training, centralized outreach, and resources to grow sustainable support networks through philanthropy and collaboration. These efforts won't just benefit military-connected students—they'll elevate every institution's capacity to serve nontraditional learners more effectively.

What we've learned at Ashland is that when veterans are given a platform to lead and contribute, they elevate the entire campus. Their innate skills—leadership, discipline, purpose—can transform classrooms and communities. HB 95 helps us recognize and amplify those contributions.

For Ashland University and others like us, this funding would allow us to deepen our service to veterans while strengthening our role in Ohio's higher education landscape.

We urge your support of HB 95 and thank you for continuing to champion Ohio's military-connected students.