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Senate Armed Services, Veteran Affairs, and Public Safety Committee
SB 223 Sponsor Testimony
June 25, 2025

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 223, which would require the ODNR director to provide a 25% discount on all state park camping and rental fees for our veterans and active-duty military.

Ohio is home to over 700,000 veterans and 32,000 active military members. We are proud of the Ohioans who choose to serve our country, as many on this Committee have done so honorably. Unfortunately, military veterans are far more likely than average to experience PTSD and psychological distress. While we are working in other ways to address PTSD directly, I would like to propose an expanded discount program for camping and recreation that may help our active and retired military members experience an increased quality of life without leaving our state.

Our state parks already offer a 10% active and retired military discount for overnight camping rentals with advance reservation. However, I believe many on this committee would like to see this discount expanded to 25%, made easier to use without advance reservations, and applied more broadly to day use and overnight rentals. There is no Ohio residency requirement to receive this discount, so we are

encouraging out-of-state veterans to camp at our 76 beautiful state parks and see all Ohio has to offer.

Last year the General Assembly expanded the baseline homestead exemption to \$50,000 for our disabled veterans. We would like to sustain this momentum and continue making Ohio a welcoming place for those who serve our country.

Chair Johnson and the members of the committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today. I welcome any questions from the committee.