

SR 68 Proponent Testimony

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Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear Jr, and members of the Senate General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of SR 68. I am Cassie B. Barlow, Colonel (retired), United States Air Force. I am also the President at the Strategic Ohio Council for Higher Education. I write to you today in several of my roles – retired AF member, former Commander of Wright Patterson AFB and President of SOCHE.

I am in support of moving NASA Headquarters to Ohio for multiple reasons. First, because we have the workforce in Ohio that can fill the positions available at NASA, now and in the future. Next, because this move shows Ohio's continued focus on being a Veteran, Military and Government friendly state, which should be a primary driver for this decision.

My family and I were honored to serve our country for 26 years, moving 13 times to different locations all around the world. My daughter attended 10 different schools in 16 years and my husband switched jobs seven times over the years. We became good at gauging communities on their support of military, veterans, and government employees. When it was time to retire, we looked diligently for a community that was government friendly, welcoming to military, and responsive and supportive the needs of Military, Veterans, and their families. We served in many communities that did not have great Military and Veteran services or resources and we frankly couldn't wait to depart those communities, and we never thought even once about settling in that community at a point in the future.

Every year approximately 200K military members separate or retire from the military. These are people with experience who have skills to share with our great State. With the declining demographics in our state and the increasing jobs due to substantive economic development, we are truly in a talent war. The winning state will be the one that thinks outside the box in terms of attracting talent. Veterans are a valuable talent pool, and the State of Ohio should do everything it can to attract Veterans from around the world to settle in Ohio. Many of the Veterans that we could attract are Veterans who call Ohio their home state and who have many family members living with us. We currently have over 6000 Veteran Friendly companies and a plethora of purple star schools. These are all steps in the right direction. We need to continue to make it clear through legislation in our state that we are Military and Veteran friendly. This is what Veterans are looking for when determining a place to settle. This legislation will help to send a strong message to everyone looking to relocate to Ohio.

When military members retire or choose to separate from the military and stay in a particular state, the military and veteran benefits offered in that state are a critical determinant in this decision. Welcoming veterans and their families with open arms with laws that signal our State's friendliness to government, military and Veterans is critical to the future of Ohio.

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