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Dr. Cassie B. Barlow
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Chair Koehler, Vice Chair Lang, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Committee.

As the President of an Ohio-based business, I am writing in strong support of House Bill 292, legislation that establishes the *Ohio Defense Commission* and the *Ohio Defense Fund.* This bill represents a forward-looking commitment to strengthening Ohio's defense industry—an industry that is not only crucial to our state's economy, but also to our national security and global competitiveness.

Ohio has long been a leader in aerospace, advanced manufacturing, and defense innovation. HB 292 will build on that foundation by improving coordination among businesses, academic institutions, and military partners, while ensuring the state can invest strategically in projects that drive technological advancement and workforce growth.

Creating the Ohio Defense Commission will give our state a unified voice in shaping defense policy and pursuing new federal opportunities. Establishing the Ohio Defense Fund will provide much-needed resources to modernize infrastructure, support businesses entering the defense supply chain, and stimulate innovation across Ohio's defense ecosystem.

For organizations like ours, HB 292 offers the tools to expand operations, increase competitiveness, and create more Ohio jobs. It demonstrates that Ohio is ready to lead on national defense priorities while strengthening our local economies and communities.

I respectfully urge the committee's favorable consideration and passage of House Bill 292.

Sincerely,

Cassie B. Barlow

Cassie B. Barlow, PhD
President, Strategic Ohio Council for Higher Education