PROPONENT TESTIMONY

House Bill 292 (Substitute) – Ohio Defense & Space Commission
Senate Workforce Development Committee

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Chair Koehler, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the substitute version of House Bill 292. My name is Kayla Renner, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Voyager Technologies, a commercial space and national security company with growing operations and long-term investment commitments in the State of Ohio.

Voyager strongly supports the creation of the Ohio Defense & Space Commission. Following the bill's successful passage through the House, we view its arrival in the Senate as a vital structural signal that Ohio intends to compete aggressively in the next generation of defense and commercial space markets.

Why This Matters to Industry

From the perspective of a company actively investing in Ohio, three things determine where capital flows:

1. Talented workforce
2. Infrastructure
3. Strategic alignment

Ohio already has extraordinary talent and federal anchors, including NASA Glenn Research Center, Air Force Research Laboratory, and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

This bill provides the third pillar: strategic alignment at the state level to better compete at the federal level.

In today's defense and commercial space economy, companies make long-term location decisions based on whether a state demonstrates a coordinated strategy for:

- Public-private partnerships
- Supply chain expansion
- Secure facility development
- Workforce pipelines
- Federal cost-share competitiveness
- Competitive innovation ecosystems

The proposed Commission and Defense Fund together would give Ohio the structural tools to compete for major programs and private investment that might otherwise go to states with more formalized space strategies.

Voyager's Investment in Ohio

Voyager is actively engaged in commercial space station development, low-Earth orbit commercialization, advanced manufacturing initiatives, and national security programs. In partnership with Ohio universities, industry leaders, and federal stakeholders, we are working to support research, technology development, and commercialization pathways that leverage Ohio's academic, industrial and defense strengths.

The future of the space and defense economy increasingly includes:

- Low-Earth orbit commercialization
- Commercial space stations
- Advanced manufacturing in microgravity
- Semiconductor and advanced materials research
- Dual-use national security technologies
- In-Orbit and Planetary vehicles and platforms
- Lunar and deep space science and exploration

Ohio is uniquely positioned not only to participate in these markets but to lead in areas where commercial innovation and national security requirements converge, aligning industry, academia, and state leadership around a common strategy. Indeed, via catalysts like the proposed Commission, Ohio could lead in several of these multi-billion-dollar markets, particularly in microgravity-enabled research, advanced materials, semiconductor integration, and dual-use defense technologies.

One example of this potential is the Voyager Institute for Space, Technology and Advancement (VISTA), a science park dedicated to in-space research and manufacturing across commercial and national security markets. VISTA is designed to be the nation's first science park devoted specifically to in-space research and industrial-scale manufacturing. Designed as a collaborative ecosystem, it is intended to attract domestic and international companies across sectors, including biopharma, AgTech, AI, robotics, semiconductors, and advanced materials. Voyager has entered into a multi-decade ground lease agreement to support this development, reflecting long-term private capital commitment to Ohio's aerospace and defense future. This initiative reflects long-term private capital investment aligned with Ohio's broader aerospace and defense base.

Voyager's presence in Ohio also builds on existing defense and space heritage. Through the acquisition of ZIN Technologies in Cleveland, a company with decades of microgravity and spaceflight hardware experience, and through defense programs supporting customers such as the Air Force Research Laboratory at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Voyager's activities in the state span both commercial space development and national security missions.

In parallel, Voyager's Starlab commercial space station program is engaging Ohio-based researchers, engineers, and manufacturers. These efforts demonstrate how coordinated state strategy can translate into durable commercial growth and strengthened defense capability.

With aligned leadership across industry, academia, and state government, Ohio has the opportunity to anchor, not merely join, the next phase of both the commercial space economy and the national security industrial base.

Strengthening Ohio's Industrial Base

From an industry perspective, the most important feature of this legislation is not symbolic; it is operational.

The ability of the Commission to:

- Support development grant agreements
- Invest in secure and specialized facilities, including SCIFs
- Enable matching funds for federal programs
- Catalyze participation of prime contractors and supply chain manufacturers
- Encourage collaboration between companies and universities
- Align statewide stakeholders to compete for large-scale federal awards

— directly impacts whether companies expand in Ohio or elsewhere.

As commercial space and defense programs grow more complex, supply chains become more integrated. Smaller manufacturers and technology firms need structured pathways to enter federal markets. A state-level commission can help create those pathways by aligning policy, investment, and workforce strategies.

In particular, aligning defense and space efforts with semiconductor and advanced materials manufacturing is essential. Space-based research and microgravity manufacturing are increasingly linked to breakthroughs in materials science and chip development. Ohio's growing semiconductor footprint creates natural synergies with space and defense innovation.

The Commission can serve as the strategic forum to ensure these ecosystems reinforce one another.

A Forward-Looking Framework

While the bill appropriately maintains broad applicability across defense and aerospace, it is important that implementation remains forward-looking.

As the Commission undertakes its duties, we encourage attention to:

- Emerging commercial space markets, including low-Earth orbit platforms
- Public-private partnership models that accelerate capital deployment
- Workforce strategies that integrate K–12, technical training, and university research
- Infrastructure necessary to compete for classified and dual-use programs

- Supply chain resilience within advanced manufacturing sectors

Ohio has the assets. The Commission gives the state the framework.

Why This Signal Matters Now

Other states have established dedicated space commissions and investment authorities to attract commercial space, defense, and advanced manufacturing growth, including Space Florida and the Texas Space Commission.

Capital is mobile. Talent is mobile. Federal programs are competitive.

By establishing the Ohio Defense & Space Commission, the General Assembly signals that Ohio intends not only to preserve its aerospace legacy but to shape the future of the space and defense economy.

Closing

Voyager Technologies is committed to long-term growth in Ohio. We believe this Commission will strengthen the state's ability to attract private investment, expand supply chains, and compete for emerging opportunities in national security and commercial space.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge favorable passage of House Bill 292 (substitute version).

Thank you for your leadership and your consideration.