

**House Bill 415 Proponent Testimony**  
**House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee**  
**February 15, 2020**

Steve Tugend  
Chair, Central Ohio Defense Group  
Attorney at Law, Kegler, Brown, Hill + Ritter Co., L.P.A.

Chairman Lanese, Vice Chair Young, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony about House Bill 415. My name is Steve Tugend, I chair the Central Ohio Defense Group and am an attorney at Kegler Brown Hill + Ritter. I offer this testimony as a proponent of House Bill 415 sponsored by Representatives Miller and Jarrells.

The Central Ohio Defense Group is an organization comprised of government, nonprofit and corporate members who are concerned about preserving and growing defense-related jobs in the Central Ohio Region. The members of the group include One Columbus, the City of Columbus, the Columbus Partnership, the Columbus Regional Airport Authority, the City of Canal Winchester, Battelle, the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, the City of Whitehall, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, The Ohio State University, Franklin County, and Kegler, Brown, Hill + Ritter.

The impact of Ohio's Department of Defense (DoD) employers in our region is significant. The DoD payroll for about 14,000 jobs is just under \$800 million annually and this yields an economic impact of about \$3 billion.

And we need to be vigilant in our protection of these jobs and resulting economic impact. Every few years, the Department of Defense undertakes a process known as Base Realignment and Closure (or "BRAC") where the country's military installations are evaluated using a cost benefit analysis. Those installations that score well are kept open or even expanded. Those that score poorly are closed. It has been since 2005 since the Pentagon last went through a BRAC process, so we believe that the next one is long overdue.

Increasingly, the Pentagon has indicated that one of the key evaluation criteria that will be considered in the next round of BRAC will be how military-friendly the installation's state laws are.

It is for this reason that the Central Ohio Defense Group is interested in House Bill 415. In short, the legislation, if it becomes law, will make Ohio a more military-friendly state and, as a result, a more attractive site for military missions and jobs.

House Bill 415 would expands eligibility for in-state tuition at state institutions of higher education by revising by easing requirements for a veteran, a veteran's spouse, or dependents may use to qualify as an Ohio resident. The bill qualifies any of those individuals for in-state tuition if the veteran served 15 or more days on active military duty or activity duty for training in any year of service. Under current law, the veteran must have served one or more years on

active military duty.

We appreciate the commendable sacrifices that our brave service men and women make, as well as their family members, having to move around the country and military bases around the world on a frequent basis. This legislation would provide an incentive for military families to remain in Central Ohio and throughout the state, particularly following the completion of military service. Ohio employers often find the leadership and technical skills of military veterans attractive in the workforce, and this incentive would be helpful in military families remaining in Ohio following completion of a college degree either as a valuable employee or to start a business of their own.

From my experience, the importance of the BRAC process necessitates that our state ensure that its military facilities have both the physical and legal infrastructure that is supportive of military missions. This proposed legislation advances that goal. The U.S. Department of Defense is more likely to locate military installations and maintain them in states that are supportive of those who have worn our country's uniform.

This bill helps our brave military veterans, including those in the National Guard and military reserve save money on college tuition, not just for themselves but also for their spouse and children. This legislation represents an opportunity to build upon Ohio's state-military partnership to remove unnecessary barriers and significantly improve the quality of life for military families. In turn, Ohio will be more strategically positioned to attract and retain defense-related jobs and to protect the state's military installations.

Chair Lanese and members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.