



Sandra O'Brien
State Senator
32nd District

Ohio Senate
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, Ohio 43215
(614) 466-7182
O'Brien@ohiosenate.gov

Committees:
Local Government & Elections (Vice-Chair)
Agriculture & Natural Resources
Primary & Secondary Education
Transportation

Sponsor Testimony – Senate Bill 160
Senate Veterans & Public Safety Committee
Senator Sandra O'Brien
May 11, 2021

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Veterans & Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to deliver sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 160, the Veteran Information Act.

This bill is the result of collaboration with multiple Veterans as well individuals that have spent years providing care to Veterans. Based on their own experiences, they described to me how countless Veterans miss out on health care opportunities that are available solely for Veterans. The reason that they miss out on these opportunities is quite simple: they don't know that these opportunities exist. Some try to get information directly from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), a process which can be complex and confusing, particularly for those who are elderly. Consequently, many Veterans simply go straight through Medicaid because they see it as a more convenient, albeit costlier, method of obtaining benefits.

SB 160 addresses this problem by requiring healthcare caseworkers at Ohio hospitals, home health agencies, hospice agencies, assisted living facilities, and skilled nursing facilities, as well as long term care ombudsmen to inform Veterans in their care about (1) the availability of health care or financial benefits through the VA and (2) congressionally chartered veterans service organizations or the county veterans service office that can assist with investigating and applying for benefits through the VA. The Ohio Department of Health would be tasked with assuring compliance during the annual agency survey process.

The Veteran Information Act provides an excellent first step towards assuring that Veterans, who risked their lives to protect us all, are properly informed about potential opportunities to receive care that is geared specifically for them. On top of that, the State of Ohio would potentially save millions of dollars spent on Medicaid due to Veterans taking advantage of services paid for by the VA rather than through Medicaid waiver funds.

Thank you again Mr. Chair for allowing me to give sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 160. I am happy to answer any questions that the Committee may have.