

Testimony of Bryan Beamer
In Support of HB 29

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the committee. I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 29.

My name is Bryan Beamer and I have been a resident of the State of Ohio since 2015. I am an active-duty Public Health Service Officer stationed in Cincinnati but am writing as an Ohio constituent of Senator Steve Wilson.

I am writing this testimony in support of HB 29 which allows a person who was discharged from the United States Public Health Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to obtain an Ohio veterans identification card.

The USPHS Commissioned Corps consists of approximately 6,700 officers ranging in rank from ensign to vice admiral, including physicians, nurses, engineers, dentists, veterinarians, allied health professionals, environmental health specialists, pharmacists, dietitians, physical therapists, and scientists. Like our colleagues in the armed branches of the uniformed services, we are often called upon to put our lives at risk in order to protect the safety and health of American citizens. For instance, Public Health Service Officers are frequently deployed to respond domestically and internationally to infectious disease threats like SARS, Ebola, Zika, and cholera, to name a few. Just like our armed colleagues, Public Health Service Officers respond to national crises like hurricanes, biological attacks, floods, acts of terrorism and other national crises. Public Health Service Officers have served alongside our Armed Services comrades in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, onboard the USNS Mercy off the coast of Indonesia, and elsewhere around the world. In Ohio, Public Health Service Officers work at the CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency, in Cincinnati; the Federal Correctional Institute in Elkton; at Wright-Patterson Medical Center in Fairborn; and at the 9th District Coast Guard Headquarters in Cleveland.

Most recently, we members of the USPHS Commissioned Corps have been called to serve our country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, we have established medical stations to assist in response in New York which represent 1,000 of the 2,500 hospital beds at the Javits Center in Manhattan. Alongside Army medical personnel, HHS medical professionals—members of the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps and the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS)—are now providing care at this field hospital. Additionally, the Commissioned Corps have developed COVID-19 Clinical Strike Teams, which include officers from the variety of disciplines needed on the frontlines: physicians, nurses, pharmacists, case managers, mental health specialists, and leadership and support staff. This kind of ready-made unit allows the Commissioned Corps to be a "cavalry" that supports healthcare systems under stress in states across the country.

In short, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I support HB 29 which would place NOAA and USPHS officers in parity with our colleagues by treating all Uniformed Services Veterans equally in terms of Veterans ID cards. I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony and I hope you will favorably consider HB 29.

Very Respectfully,

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