

Testimony of John W. Anderson, LTC (Retired) US Army,  
In Support of OH HB29 | 2021-2022 | 134th General Assembly

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the committee. I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB29.

I am John W. Andersson, a resident of the State of Ohio living at 1838 Sandy Lake Rd, Ravenna, OH, 44266, Ph: 330-548-9174. I am retired. I served in the US Army Medical Service Corps for approximately 30 years and having attained the rank of LTC. My military experience in the US Army Medical Department (AMEDD) on occasion put me in touch with and working with USPHS personnel when planning and training for support of victims of natural disasters in the US. When we worked and trained, there was no way of distinguishing differences between members of the services except by the uniform.

I am currently the Secretary and Treasurer of the Ohio Council of Chapters of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), [www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org). USPHS and NOAA officers along with those of the military services across the US comprise the approximately 350,000 members of MOAA. MOAA, as a member of The Military Coalition, <http://www.themilitarycoalition.org/>, is the leading voice on compensation and benefit matters for all members of the military community. The association plays an active role in military personnel matters and especially proposed legislation affecting the career force, the retired community, and veterans of the uniformed services.

I am writing this testimony in support of HB29 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. They are very deserving.

As you may be aware, 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. USPHS officers, like members of the armed branches of the uniformed services, are often called upon to put their lives at risk 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. Furthermore, 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 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, members of the USPHS Commissioned Corps have been called to serve our country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, the USPHS has established medical stations to assist in COVID-19 response and serve in 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.

For their part, NOAA Commissioned officers receive the same Presidential Commissions and take the same oath of office as their counterparts in the Armed Forces. The rules of law applicable to the Armed forces under Title 10 of the United States Code for retirement and pay are applicable to NOAA Corps Officers. See 33USC3701. Their pay and benefits (including medical benefits under Tricare) are the same as the other Armed Forces and their uniformed promotion structure is the same as that of the United States Navy. They are subject to frequent transfers, serve extended periods at sea under hazardous conditions and operate several er of different types of aircraft including those used in hurricane research, which penetrate hurricanes at low levels to provide critical data for hurricane warnings.

In short, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I support HB29 which would place NOAA and USPHS officers in parity with all Uniformed Services Veterans in terms of Veterans ID cards in Ohio. The men and women that comprise these organizations in Ohio are very deserving. I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony and hope you will favorably consider the passage of this important bill.

Very Respectfully,

John W. Anderson, LTC (Retired) US Army