**Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee**

**House Bill 603 – Military In-State Tuition**

**Sponsor Testimony**

**13 November 2018**

Chair Duffey, Vice Chair Antani, and members of the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity today to testify on behalf of House Bill 603, a bill that would help reduce the cost of education for Active Duty Service members and their eligible family members who live in Ohio.

I am sure many of you are aware of the tremendous sacrifices service members and their families make for citizens of the United States. Their service to our country is brave and commendable, and it is the reason I am so passionate about supporting our current service members and our veterans after they retire their uniform. Although some service members attain transferable skills during their time in Active Duty, many do not. Some skills are extremely useful in the military sphere but do not necessarily translate to valuable skills in the civilian world. Beyond that, some servicewomen and men serve their country honorably but have a different vision for their lives beyond the military.

For many, college is an option to gain the skills needed to find a job after their service is over. For some, it is a place to start over and begin the career they have always dreamed of after their call to serve has been completed.

In addition, dependents of Active Duty members sometimes find themselves calling a new place home every few years or even months. Without a place to permanently call home, it is hard to justify limiting a dependent’s college choices to the state in which his or her parent or guardian was last stationed or their servicemember’s home of record.

Currently, universities across the state have varying levels of support for our Armed Forces members and their dependents. This bill will make all of Ohio’s public colleges and universities consistent across the board by waiving the 1-year living requirement and immediately making our Active Duty members and their dependents eligible for in-state tuition. Through House Bill 603, we have the chance to drastically reduce the economic burden of attending postsecondary institutions for servicemembers who wish to further their education and their families who follow them as they are stationed in Ohio.

Logistically, Ohio attracted 21,594 out-of-state freshmen in 2016 alone, and many people who attend college in our great state choose to stay. These college graduates then influence our economy and our work force and make an impact on the community around them. If we could make Ohio institutions viable options for current Active Duty members and their families, we could be growing our workforce; from both children remaining in the state for school and career opportunities, and these service members who may choose to make Ohio their home after they hang up their uniform.

Beyond the numbers, this is a small step we can take to show our military members and their families that we support them and that we appreciate them during their service to our country in Ohio. My office has spoken at length with the Department of Higher Education, and they have no opposition to the legislation. Additionally, we have received the endorsement of the Inter-University Council, the voluntary educational association of Ohio's public universities. Although difficult to quantify, LSC has determined the fiscal impact will be minimal. Nonetheless, the return on investment will be significant.

It is for these reasons that I request favorable consideration of House Bill 603. Chair Duffey, Vice Chair Antani, and members of the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee I thank you for the opportunity to testify today and will answer any questions you may have.