**Senate Finance Committee**

**House Bill 158 Sponsor Testimony**

**Representatives Hearcel F. Craig and Rep. Rick Perales**

**Unemployment Compensation for Military Spouses**

**October 24, 2017**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Raking Member Skindell and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for providing me the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 158. I would also like to thank Representative Rick Perales for agreeing to be a joint sponsor on this legislation.

Currently, Ohio’s Unemployment Compensation program disqualifies a military spouse from applying for unemployment benefits when accompanying his or her spouse on a new military assignment because the employers did not directly cause the job separation.

H.B. 158 would remedy this situation by providing unemployment compensation eligibility for military spouses who leave an Ohio job due to a military transfer. This change is just one thing we can do to lighten the burden on military families and to show our support for those who protect and serve our country. It is our duty to protect the families of the service men and women who sacrifice so much for our freedoms.

Most recently, Louisiana enacted a law to allow military spouses to receive unemployment compensation[[1]](#footnote-1). However, the three remaining states: Idaho, North Dakota and Ohio are the only states which excludes military spouses from the general unemployment benefits who had been forced to leave their previous employment because of the active duty member’s Permanent Change of Station (PCS). Comparatively there are twenty – six states including our neighboring states of Indiana, Michigan, and Pennsylvania who provides this benefit specifically to military spouses. The remaining twenty states have some sort of general law or regulation that military spouses would qualify for just as those who are civilians[[2]](#footnote-2).

A study by the Military Spouse Employment Report estimated unemployment in 2012 for armed forces spouses aged 18-24 was 30%, nearly three times higher than the civilian rate of 10%. For the age group of 25-44, the unemployment rates were 15% compared to 5%.[[3]](#footnote-3) These are alarming statistics because we could be doing more to help these families as they serve this state and country.

Military families make tremendous sacrifices, especially in times of mobilization. Frequent moves, school transitions, and separation of the family are common. A military spouse often must work to meet the financial needs of family not unlike the general population who depend upon dual income to avoid hardship.

I know as well as anyone the budgetary concerns of our current state government. I would not come before this committee and recommend a bill that is not conscious of these concerns. It is vital that Ohio is a leader in implementing this important initiative. I believe we must show our military families that they are just as important to this great state when it comes to this matter.

At this point, I would like to ask Rep. Perales to speak about the fiscal costs of House Bill 158.

Chairman Oelslager and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I thank you for allowing us to offer testimony.

1. Louisiana State Legislature, 2016 Regular Session House Bill 1142. Effective date: 08/01/2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “The In’s and Out’s of Unemployment Compensation for MilSpouses” National Military Family Association. June 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “Military Spouse Employment Report” Institute for Veterans and Military Families. February 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)