



Proponent Testimony on House Bill 558
Presented by Jeff Hoagland, President and CEO, Dayton Development Coalition
Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee
November 10, 2020

Chairman Lang, Vice Chairman Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on behalf of House Bill 558, which would require public children services agencies to report child abuse or neglect in military families to the appropriate military authorities.

The Dayton Development Coalition supports passage of this legislation, and we thank Rep. Cindy Abrams for sponsoring this important initiative.

The Dayton Development Coalition is an economic development organization that seeks to attract, retain, and grow jobs in the 14-county Dayton region. This includes attracting and retaining new missions and jobs at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and Springfield Air National Guard Base. With more than 30,000 workers, Wright-Patterson is the largest single-site employer in Ohio. Attracting and retaining jobs at the Base is critical not only to the Dayton region, but to the entire state, since the economic impact of the Base has been estimated at \$15.5 billion annually.

I know you might be wondering why an economic development organization would be advocating for passage of a child protection bill – an important issue, but one that is outside our normal area of expertise. The reason is that not only is it the right thing to do to protect children, but also because this legislation sends a clear message to our military services that Ohio is a partner in their effort to support military families.

Earlier this year, the Air Force established a rating system to evaluate communities in support of military families. There are numerous criteria tied to this evaluation. The Air Force

uses the ratings to determine where to locate new missions and jobs. So, Ohio's ability to retain and gain missions is heavily dependent on how we support military spouses and families.

One of the ten top issues of the Department of Defense State Liaison Office is implementation of a state requirement to have children's protective services inform military services of instances of child abuse and neglect. That is because reporting these cases to the Department of Defense Local Family Advocacy Program representative can ensure that resources are made available for the military child and to his or her parents or guardian.

Military families are often under tremendous stress. The military services have various investigative, intervention, and rehabilitative support resources that can assist each state's child welfare system in addressing allegations of child abuse. In addition, timely reporting and quick intervention and support, such as providing a family with medical and counseling services available through the military installation, can help ensure a more positive outcome for all.

The Coalition views passage of this legislation as a win-win for our community. It helps protect children in our state while also serving as a partner to our military services as they work to do what is best for kids and military families. More than 25 other states have already enacted the policy, and other states are considering similar legislation. Failure to pass this legislation would put Ohio in the minority of states that provide this important service to our nation's military families. That's not the message we want to send to military families, and it's not the message we want to send to Defense Department officials making decisions where to place new missions and jobs.

Again, I thank you for considering this important bill.