Good morning.

My name is Linda Bruff. I am a military spouse. My husband is active duty Air Force and is the Staff Judge Advocate assigned to the Youngstown and Pittsburg Air Stations. We’re from Atlanta and I worked in the film industry there. I’d like to share my story and some observations about working in film there versus working here and how a I think we could benefit from a more aggressive Motion Picture Tax Credit.

We purchased a home in University Heights. We chose a location closer to Cleveland specifically because of the film incentives and the opportunity for me to return to work. I was excited to work in film again after living in several states without film incentives.

I worked with many military spouses and veterans on film projects in Atlanta. It’s an industry that works well with our family demands. During the summer months, I also worked with many teachers who found jobs in film to supplement their incomes. When the economy crashed and people were getting laid off, it was the film industry in Atlanta that employed people, kept their heads above water, and saved several of my friends from losing their homes.

The film industry hires from all walks of life. You don’t need a film degree. I don’t have one. I was a housewife when I stumbled into it. They hire people from the community and their skills are valued and compensated. The great thing about bringing a year-round film industry here is that someone in Ohio can be unemployed on a Monday and after sending an email or two, they can have a paying job lined up for Tuesday. It moves very quickly.

Communities and local businesses are also benefit. Productions want to be welcomed back and they go out of their way to source their supplies through local businesses. When you have a robust film industry, the jobs start to multiply. Several of my former colleagues left acting or crew work and started their own small businesses that tie into film, such as personal chefs, location services, and even two companies that takes tourist on bus tours of the popular film locations.

A robust film industry can also turn cities like Youngstown around. I’ve seen first-hand how they invest in infrastructure. We’ve all heard of the big studios being built in Georgia. Most of these studios aren’t being built in the big cities, but in more rural areas where they can get the enormous square footage necessary. One studio has taken over the decommissioned Ft. McPherson and given that area new life (<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/la-ca-st-tyler-perry-guided-tour-20161016-snap-story.html>). Another company converted multiple warehouses in a long-vacant textile mill for a TV show sound stages and offices. That once blighted area with multiple vacant stores is now bouncing back with restaurants, services, and new stores to service the volume of people working in the former mill.

The film industry manufactures movies. It’s really hard work. I get dirty. I get rained on. I wear steel-toed boots some days. I’ve spent 19 hours freezing on a set with my teeth chattering so much my jaw hurt for two days. It isn’t glamorous. It’s sometimes grueling, but this is what I love to do. It is incredibly lucrative for the communities, cities, and states who welcome it. We will never be replaced by robots, and no one will ever say that Japan makes better movies than we do.

I fell into the film world completely by accident and only because my neighbor, who worked in the industry, saw my light on late one night and she needed someone to fill a spot, so she knocked. I’m so glad I opened that door. It changed my life. Here I am, 8 years later, asking you to open your door. You won’t regret it.

I worked year-round in Atlanta. In the 22 months we have lived here, I have only been able to find five days’ worth of work on film sets. Ohio’s current incentives only allow for a handful of productions a year. Atlanta has 33 productions that are large budget film and TV. Some of us travel out of state to find work and to keep our resumes competitive, where we stay in their hotels, shop in their stores, and eat in their restaurants. And those 33 productions I mentioned in Atlanta? Those are the just ones filming this month. (<http://www.projectcasting.com/news/now-filming-in-georgia/>)

In closing, I encourage you to sit through the credits the next time you watch a film or TV show. Look at all those names. Those are people who got jobs that weren’t available to us because other states are more competitive. Take some time and watch behind the scenes footage and bonus features on a DVD. Look at the people working, not just the stars. The film industry really is a people industry. Films are made for people, about people, and by people. Ohio has some of the hardest working and best people I’ve ever met. We’re ready to get to work. We just need you to open that door. Open it, invite the film industry into Ohio the way you would any other manufacturer, with great Motion Picture Tax Credit that will keep them here for decades to come.

Thank you for your time and for listening to our stories today.