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Committees:

Health
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State Representative Adam Holmes

97th House District of Ohio

House Bill 569 Sponsor Testimony

Chairwoman Lanese, Vice Chairman Young, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 569- The Hidden Heroes Scholarship Act. As State Reps, our bills frequently include legislation that revolves around one of three questions- How do we lower barriers to higher education? How do we improve access to quality healthcare? How do we support and give back to veterans who have sacrificed their physical and mental health in service to our nation? HB 569 is a bill that addresses all three questions simultaneously.

House Bill 569 authorizes state universities in Ohio to create the Hidden Heroes Scholarship Program. This voluntary, university funded program will cover the education costs of family members caring for 100% service-connected disabled veterans. The bill allows universities to provide 100% last dollar tuition waivers, pay stipends, and grant college credits to scholarship recipients. Because this program will be optional and funded by each participating university, it comes at no additional cost to Ohio taxpayers and imposes no mandate in terms of minimum or maximum amounts universities must put toward the program.

With over 900 enrolled VA caregivers in the state, House Bill 569 has the potential to impact hundreds of veteran families. That is why universities and veterans' organizations are excited about this bill. This legislation received overwhelmingly positive feedback in IP meetings and the only question since introduction has been from private universities asking that

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the bill be expanded to include them. Seeing the excitement reinforces to just how much Ohioans care about our military families, and proponent testimony will allow this committee to also see that energy and patriotism.

House Bill 569 will lower education costs for some of the most selfless, hardworking people in our state; putting degrees in their hands that otherwise may have been out of reach. By helping caregivers achieve their higher education aspirations, the program will help them gain access to better paying and more flexible jobs, leading in turn to greater healthcare options for our disabled veterans. By providing access and opportunity to veteran caregivers, we will be able to give back to both our heroes in uniform and the hidden heroes that stand behind them.

Thank you Representative White for joint-sponsoring the bill with me, and thank you to the Committee for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony today. We are happy to take questions at this time.