



## Testimony to the Ohio Sunset Review Committee re. the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship Board

*Daniel Eakins, Policy Director*

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Chairman Brown, members of the Ohio Sunset Review Committee, I am Danny Eakins, Policy Director for the Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS), and I serve as the Director's Designee and Chair of the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship Board. Thank you for the opportunity to present you testimony regarding this important and historic Board.

The Ohio War Orphans Scholarship Board is authorized by Ohio Revised Code Section 5910.02 to review and approve applications for the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship from students with a veteran parent who has been killed in action or severely disabled due to a service connected condition during a period of wartime service. The board consists of 8 members as follows: the Chancellor of the Department of Higher Education or designee; the Director of the Department of Veterans Services or designee; one member of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker; one member of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate; and four members appointed by the Governor from among the following organizations: American Legion (AL), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and American Veterans (AMVETS). The size and members of the board make an ideal forum for quality discussions regarding the scholarship.

The Board is provided a line item from the General Revenue Fund as part of the state biennial budget. 100% of the money provided in the line item is used to fund the actual scholarships. No compensation is provided to members of the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship Board for their activities in support of the Board though they may be reimbursed by ODVS for expenses to attend the meeting. In my experience, no member of the Board has requested reimbursement in this regard. In HB64, enacted this year, the Governor and General Assembly provided \$6.8 million for FY2016 to fund 920 total scholarships and have budgeted \$7.1 million for FY2017 to ensure that scholarships for the children of killed and severely disabled veterans are funded at 100% of tuition at a University System of Ohio public institution.

The Board receives clerical and other assistance from the Chancellor of the Department of Higher Education as provided for in Ohio Revised Code Section 5910.02. Higher Education employs 1 full-time staff who reviews incoming applications and prepares recommendations to the Board for approval based on funding provided to the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship through the biennial state budget. The Department of Higher Education typically receives between 300-350 new applications each fiscal year. The Board then meets once a year, in late July, to formally review and vote on approval of those recommendations.

The dedicated veterans and public servants of the Board help ensure the State of Ohio lives up to our historical and statutory obligation to support access to higher education for the children of those who have sacrificed so much of themselves in military service to the United States. Please accept my personal gratitude to the Ohio General Assembly for its long and robust support for the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship program and Ohio's veteran and military community. My colleagues and I will endeavor to answer any questions you may have.