



MANPOWER AND
RESERVE AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

February 25, 2021

Delegate Shane Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

Remarks of
Christopher R. Arnold
Northeast Region Liaison
United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office

Support of: HB1006 - Health Occupations – Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses – Temporary Licensure, Certification, and Registration

Testimony

Madame Chair and honorable committee members, the Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to offer its strongest possible endorsement of the policies set forth in House Bill 1006, an act regarding a requirement for health occupations boards to issue a temporary expedited license, certificate, or registration to a service member, veteran, or military spouse who meet certain requirements.

My name is Christopher Arnold. I am the northeast region liaison at the DoD-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. We represent the Department and establish relationships with state leaders across the country who are concerned for troops and their families' welfare by harmonizing state and federal law and regulation on policy problems of national significance. These are identified by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, and the National Guard Bureau as areas where states can play a crucial role.

This legislation echoes the historic 2020 military spouse legislation from Speaker Adrienne Jones that eased application requirements for a service member, veteran, or military spouse who applies for an occupational or professional license. The Speaker's bill, Chap 176, enacted revisions to reciprocity requirements for occupations and professions regulated by the Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing, removing the requirement for a substantial equivalency determination. This bill makes identical changes for occupations and professions governed by the Health Professional Licensing Boards.

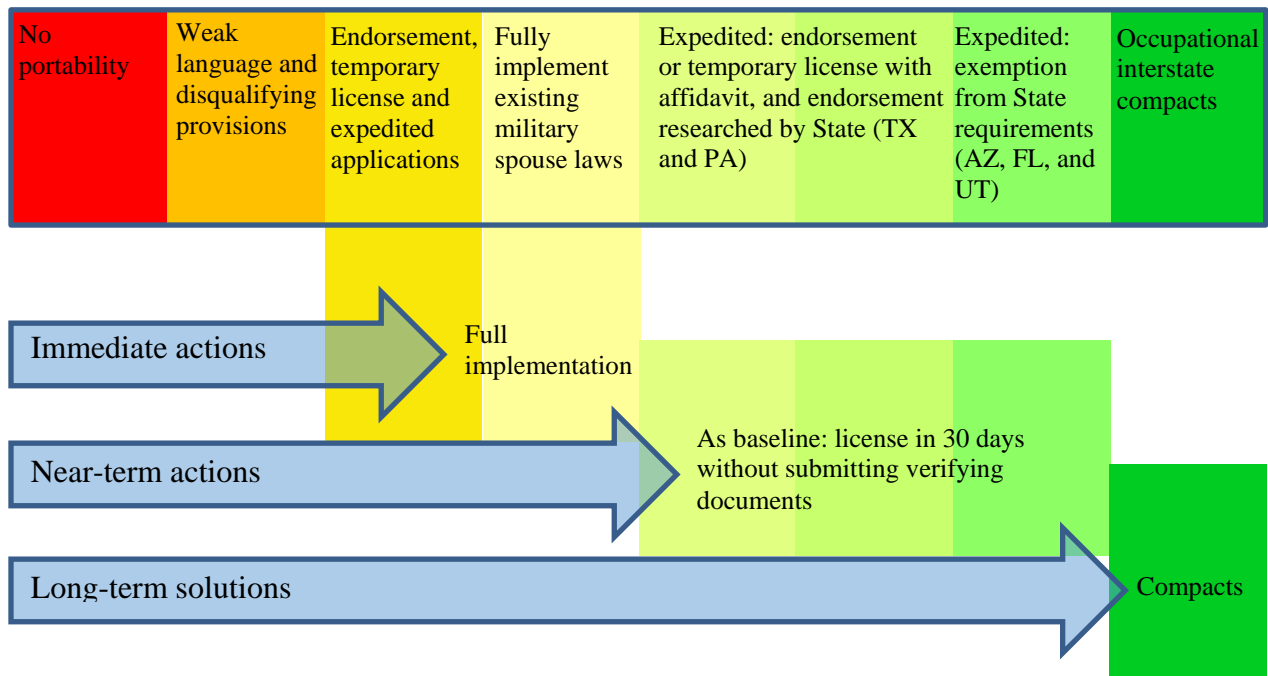
Occupational licensure has been an enduring problem for military spouses. Obtaining a license in a new State can be both time consuming and expensive, and military spouses often cannot adequately anticipate how to prepare for licensure in a new State due to the unpredictable nature of military moves. The short duration of military assignments, coupled with lengthy relicensing processes, can discourage military spouses from seeking relicensure, causing them to quit an occupation or causing military families to leave the military.

The Secretaries of the Military Departments have made the importance of military spouse licensure explicitly clear as they consider the availability of license reciprocity when evaluating future basing or mission alternatives. A 2015 report by the Maryland Military Department found the largest 15 installations in the Old Line State support 410,219 jobs and generated \$20.5 billion in defense spending, or, roughly 5.7% of State GDP.¹

In 2013, Maryland passed Chap 154 and 155 regarding Service member licensure and credit for military training and education as well as expediting military spouse license applications. In 2019, Maryland passed Chap 312 requiring the expedited license to be issued within 60 days and posting of that timeline on agency websites. HB1006 will extend the provisions of such laws to the health occupations, which were not encompassed in those prior acts.

Further changes to licensure to facilitate reciprocity in State licensure programs for military spouses will continue to take time to cover all occupations in all States. Complicating matters further, the term “reciprocity” is used differently among the States. The continuum of reciprocity related programs is represented graphically below. The continuum goes from red, representing little to no portability, to dark green, representing the DoD’s optimum state of full reciprocity.

Understanding that military spouses need assistance now, and that many States have already committed to a variety of approaches, the Department advocates that States should pursue multiple approaches to reciprocity simultaneously. Available alternatives can be categorized as being more immediately attainable, achievable within the near-term, or obtainable in the long-term:



¹ Department of Defense. *Military Spouse Licensure: State Best Practices and Strategies for Achieving Reciprocity*. November 2019. Retrieved from <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/military-spouse-licensure-report-2019.pdf>

The Department encourages States to engage in immediate actions to fully implement military spouse licensure laws, near-term actions to at least attain a baseline of getting military spouses a license in 30 days based on minimal documentation, and removing substantially equivalent language; and long-term solutions for reciprocity through compacts. HB1006 will ensure this baseline for the health occupations.

A February 2020 report the Secretary of Defense on military spouse licensure was provided to the Governor, emphasizing DoD's continued emphasis on license portability for military spouses. In assessing Maryland's licensing practices, DoD found that *“current law requires boards to evaluate the substantial equivalency of the applicant's application prior to issuing the temporary license, which likely requires the verifying documentation for the review. Limiting this requirement to issuance of the permanent license, or stipulating that the boards perform their initial due diligence using an application, and an affidavit, would limit the time and effort required of the military spouse applicant.”*

To effectively evaluate whether an applicant's license is 'substantially equivalent' a board generally evaluates the coursework, test scores, and applicable practicum hours of the applicant, along with previously held licenses and work experience. This perpetuates the delays experienced by military spouses.² HB1006 would eliminate the requirement for agencies to determine whether the requirements for licensure in the other state are substantially equivalent to those in Maryland for the 29 licensing boards and commissions overseen by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. This will expedite the licensure process.

The Secretary of Defense has established military spouse employment as a key aspect of supporting military families, and the Secretaries of the Military Departments have also expressed the importance of military spouse licensure by making it part of the consideration for future mission basing. How fast these actions and solutions can be approved and implemented is up to the States.

In closing, we are grateful for the tremendous efforts that Maryland has historically made to support our military members and their families. We appreciate the opportunity to support the policy reflected in HB1006 and are especially grateful to the Delegate Crosby for introducing this important piece of legislation. As always, as Northeast Region Liaison, I stand ready to answer whatever questions you may have.

Yours etc.,

CHRISTOPHER R. ARNOLD

Northeast Region Liaison

Defense-State Liaison Office

² National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association, and the Council of State Governments. Occupational Licensing Final Report, Assessing State Policies and Practices. December 2020. Retrieved from https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/Labor/NCSL_DOL_Report_05_web_REVISED.pdf