



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

Statement of CAPT Lynn Nash
Maryland Military Coalition

SB 003 - Health Occupations – Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses – Temporary
Licensure, Certification, Registration, and Permitting
January 30, 2024

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausman and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I believe that this is the fourth time that I have come before a Senate Committee on this issue. On behalf of the Maryland Military Coalition as its Communications Director, I come before you in support of SB 003, Temporary Licensure for Service Members, Veterans and service spouses. For the record, my name is CAPT (R) Lynn Nash. I am a nurse. I started my uniformed services career as a military spouse, and then went on to serve for over 30 years on active duty in both the U.S. Army and Public Health Service.

SB 003 is a common-sense approach to protect the public, while at the same time relieving critical shortages across the spectrum of healthcare occupations. Those shortages are highest in nursing and behavioral health.

Here's some statistics that support why this bill is necessary:

- The average military family moves every 2-3 years. For military spouses, these frequent relocations mean major disruptions in their careers.
- Fifty percent (50%) of active-duty spouses work in fields that require an occupational license and each state and territory has its own process—that's 55 different sets of rules.
- Every time a service family moves, the spouse often spends thousands of hours (and \$\$\$) to continue their career. For me, last year it took me 140 days to re-activate my Maryland nursing license, and then it expired 6 weeks later and had to be renewed. The total cost for me was just shy of \$1,000 in addition to the cost of maintaining my home state license.
- The average time to look and find a job is 19 weeks.
- Unemployment rates for military spouse are 3 to 6 times greater than the national average, even though they often have more experience and education.
- The Department of Defense sees licensure as a MAJOR issue that negatively influences reenlistment decisions and the military's ability to recruit and retain service members.

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That is why **Department of Defense has supported similar legislation for over 16 years** because they see the portability of licensure as a *readiness* issue.

SB003 mitigates this licensure problem by creating an expedited process for service members, their spouses and veterans to get a professional license here in Maryland—in 15 business days. The applicant will be assigned an advisor to help them navigate the process, and the General Assembly will get a report each year on the processing of applications for our service-connected group. The cost is minimal and you will be improving the process for all licensure.

The Maryland Military Coalition (MMC) **strongly supports SB 003**, however we ask for **three amendments**:

- First, **remove the one-year application restriction for Veterans**, especially if you want to improve the number of available practitioners. I left service in 2019, which means that this legislation excludes many prior service veterans like me.
- Second, (d) (2). While the definition of service members is amended to include the Uniformed Services as defined by 10 U.S.C. § 101, the definition goes further to define reservists as a component of the **armed forces**. This excludes the five members of the U.S. Public Health Service's Ready Reserve. Please **change this definition of reservists to "the reserve component of the Uniformed Services"**.
- And finally, I ask that you consider requiring the establishment of **same day, walk-through, temporary licensing**, like five other states (Arizona, Idaho, Louisiana, Missouri and South Carolina). The applicant walks in with their paperwork and walks out with a license and can start work the next day.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a non-partisan organization of 19 Veteran organizations representing over 150,000 Maryland uniformed services men and women and their families -- almost half of the 355,000 veterans in the State.

Thank you, Senator Jackson, for sponsoring this bill which will certainly help our service community.