



Board of Physicians

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Harbhajan Ajrawat, M.D., Chair

2024 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO.: SB3
TITLE: Health Occupations – Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses – Temporary Licensure, Certification, Registration, and Permitting
COMMITTEE: Finance
POSITION: Letter of Concern

TITLE: Health Occupations – Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses – Temporary Licensure, Certification, Registration, and Permitting

BILL ANALYSIS:

SB3 requires certain health occupation boards to issue an expedited temporary license to a service member, veteran, or military spouse who meets specific requirements. The bill also permits a health occupations board to apply to the Secretary of Health for approval of an alternate process for licensure that does not meet specific requirements.

POSITION AND RATIONALE:

The Maryland Board of Physicians, State Acupuncture Board, State Board of Dental Examiners, State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners, State Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors, State Board of Pharmacy, State Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners, State Board of Occupational Therapy Practice, and the State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (the Boards) are submitting this Letter of Concern for Senate Bill 3 Health Occupations – Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses – Temporary Licensure, Certification, Registration, and Permitting. The Boards support efforts to ease the licensure process for service members and their families. However, given recent changes to federal law and other efforts by the Boards to expedite licenses for service members, veterans, and military spouses, the Boards believe that temporary licenses are unnecessary and costly.

As part of the Veterans Full Employment Act of 2013, the Boards have developed procedures to expedite all licenses for service members, veterans, and spouses. In addition, many of the Boards have established other pathways for expedited licensure. For example, the Maryland Board of Physicians includes the following licensure pathways:

- Participation in the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact
- Licensure by endorsement
- Licensure by reciprocity with Virginia and the District of Columbia

Additionally, the Maryland Board of Physicians has introduced online application processes and licensure by Uniform Application (UA) which allows physicians to apply for licensure in multiple

states simultaneously. The Federation Credentials Verification Service (FCVS) has also been implemented to verify physician credentials. Efforts are also currently being made to fully transition to online applications for all practitioners licensed by the Maryland Board of Physicians for a more streamlined licensure process, and drafting of regulations to further support service members and their spouses, including fee reductions and deferments of continuing education requirements during deployment.

These processes are effective and work well to expedite such licensure. As a result, the Boards issue 99% of all licenses within ten days of receiving the last qualifying document.

While the intent of SB 3 is laudable, recent changes to federal law render it unnecessary. In January 2023, the Veterans Auto and Education Acts of 2022 went into effect. Under this law, military members and their spouses who relocate to Maryland and are in good standing with all applicable licensing authorities are exempt from Maryland's licensing requirements for the duration of their military orders. To comply with federal law, the Boards have established policies and procedures to provide letters of qualification to individuals practicing under this license exemption. This exemption to licensure will allow service members and their spouses to practice in Maryland without interruption and provide ample time to apply for an expedited license through the Boards, if desired, without needing a temporary license.

The majority of the Boards do not issue temporary licenses for any regulated practitioners. Issuing both temporary and full licenses will slow the process rather than expedite it. The expedited temporary license described in the bill creates a new license category for each health occupation and would require additional staffing and significant changes to the Boards' licensure and practitioner profile systems to implement. Moreover, introducing temporary licenses would not significantly reduce the time required to process and issue a license.

The Boards are happy to work with the sponsor and bill proponents to further improve the licensure process for service members, veterans, and military spouses. However, the Boards do not believe that the temporary licenses proposed in SB3 are the correct path.

For all of these reasons, the Board of Physicians, along with the State Acupuncture Board, State Board of Dental Examiners, State Board of Massage Therapy Examiners, State Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors, State Board of Pharmacy, State Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners, State Board of Occupational Therapy Practice, and the State Board of Examiners of Psychologists respectfully requests that the Committee vote unfavorably on SB3.

Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact:

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Singh Ajrawat".

Harbhajan Ajrawat, M.D.
Chair, Maryland Board of Physicians

The opinion of the Boards expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Maryland Department of Health or the Administration.