



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 316TH WING (AFDW)
JOINT BASE ANDREWS, MARYLAND 20762

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Senator Paul G. Pinsky
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support of: SB 230 - Health Occupations - Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses -
Temporary Licensure, Certification, Registration, and Permitting

Dear Senator Pinsky:

Joint Base Andrews and the 316th Wing are grateful for the opportunity to support policy changes proposed in Maryland Senate Bill 230 (cross-filed with House Bill 112), which addresses licensing issues affecting our service members and their families. This legislation would require health occupations boards to issue a temporary expedited license, certificate, or registration to a service member, veteran, or military spouse who meet certain requirements. In addition to this proposed legislation, Joint Base Andrews and the 316th Wing support development of a more rapid and efficient process for full licensure of military member, veteran, and military spouse healthcare professionals.

I am Colonel Tyler Schaff, commander of the 316th Wing and the installation commander for Joint Base Andrews, which is the only Air Force led military installation in Maryland. We have more than 1,500 military healthcare professionals working at our Malcolm Grow Medical Clinics and Surgery Center (MGMCS) under the 316th Medical Group (316 MDG). Each of them provides healthcare services to military personnel, veterans, and their families throughout the National Capital Region. During the pandemic, our military member healthcare professionals have provided emergency support throughout Maryland and beyond without the need for lengthy licensure processes. I would like to point out that our military member healthcare professionals as well as the MGMCS complies with the Joint Commission's hospital accreditation standards.

Joint Base Andrews and the United States Air Force welcome the prospect for our military member, veteran, and military spouse healthcare professionals to obtain expedited licenses for them to provide healthcare support at state and local community healthcare facilities. Provision of expedited licenses by the state's Health Boards creates a win-win-win scenario. Firstly, our military member healthcare professionals will be able to work in a greater variety of healthcare areas that will help increase their experience and improve their military

readiness that will help them meet our National Security requirements while they are deployed. Secondly, our military spouses and veterans will have greater opportunities to work in their chosen fields leading to increased employment, job satisfaction, and improved integration within the local community. Lastly, the addition of qualified and licensed military-oriented healthcare professionals in the state of Maryland will help provide state and local community healthcare facilities with increased flexibility to mitigate potential or existing staffing shortages.

The Air Force and Joint Base Andrews applauds Maryland's membership in the increased number of interstate compacts it recently joined that involve healthcare and other professions as a means to enhance license portability for military members, veterans, and military spouses. However, while compact membership provides a positive step forward, we recognize that not all 50 states participate in every compact, which can diminish their positive impact on our military members, veterans, and military spouses who move to Maryland on military orders and have valid licenses in states not within the compact. This issue demonstrates again the importance of the SB 230/HB 112 Bills to expedite licenses for our military-related healthcare professionals.

We recognize that Maryland continues to strive to improve license portability for military members, veterans, and military spouses. Illustrating this point, the 2021 Air Force Licensure Assessment in support of Air and Space Force families rated Nursing license portability as green, but other healthcare-related professions continue to be rated yellow for license portability due to Maryland's current statutes containing barriers to licensure and certification portability for military spouses who continue to have trouble with obtaining a license to work in Maryland. However, the current expedited temporary licensure process (under Maryland Law Article – Health Occupations, Sections 1-701 through 1-706, Annotated Code of Maryland, 2014 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement) still allows the associated health occupation boards leeway to slow the process based on current standards and criteria and use of language such as “may allow license renewal” and “may adopt regulations.”

We have several current and past military member, veteran, and military spouse healthcare professionals, each having licenses in other states, who have expressed negative experiences with Maryland's healthcare license process. At least one of them totaled more than eight months to obtain a Nursing license with frustrating phone call wait times more than six hours. They had to make physical visits to the Nursing Board, during the pandemic, to alleviate the virtual connection challenges they experienced. In comparison, one of our military spouses, with a Nurse Practitioner license in another state, applied for and received a license within 14 days from one of Maryland's neighboring states. The difference between eight months in Maryland and 14 days elsewhere is unfathomable.

From a military readiness perspective, this new legislation will help alleviate some of the roadblocks our military members, veterans, and military spouses have experienced in the past. It appears that SB 230/HB 112 will provide them with greater opportunities to support the state and local healthcare organizations in our local communities. Specifically, the bills will help our military member healthcare professionals on Joint Base Andrews since our Malcolm Grow Medical Clinics and Surgery Center is an ambulatory surgery center and does not support trauma patients, acute care surgery, or inpatient services. To ensure our military healthcare

professionals maintain the medical skills needed to support our nation's critical wartime and humanitarian contingency functions while deployed, we rely on civilian partnerships with healthcare organizations in our local community.

Building a community partnership, Joint Base Andrews established a Training Affiliation Agreement with the University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center, the second busiest trauma center in Maryland, for a variety of military healthcare professionals to obtain initial, proficiency, and readiness skills training. However, current State law drives enhanced licensing requirements that incur expensive fees for all medical professionals practicing at the Medical Center resulting in limited readiness value for the military healthcare professionals at Joint Base Andrews.

For example, fully integrating key Joint Base Andrews medical staff, under the current legislation, would require an estimated total biannual cost of \$50K in state licensing fees, more than 1000 man-hours of time to complete Maryland licensure requirements, and result in onboarding delays for Joint Base Andrews personnel between three and 12 months. During the current license approval timeline, a military healthcare professional will likely be deployed to an operational theater that would result in further delays.

We look forward to this new legislation helping to mitigate any existing delays. I stand ready to answer whatever questions you may have regarding this important legislation.

Respectfully,

TYLER R. SCHAFF, Colonel, USAF
Commander