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## OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

January 31, 2023

**Maryland Senate  
Senate Committee on Finance  
11 Bladen Street Room 2 West Wing  
Annapolis, MD**

**Senator Melony G. Griffith  
Chair**

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

**Support of: SB 78 – Health Occupations - Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses - Temporary Licensure, Certification, Registration, and Permitting**

### **Testimony**

The Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to support policy changes proposed in Maryland Senate Bill 78, 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, within fifteen days.

My name is Christopher Arnold. I am the Mid-Atlantic region liaison at the United States Department of Defense-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.

As part of these efforts, Maryland passed Chap 154 and 155, the "Veterans Full Employment Act of 2013," regarding Service member licensure and credit for military training and education as well as expediting military spouse license applications.<sup>1</sup> However, these methods proved insufficient to address the underlying concerns of military spouses.<sup>2</sup>

Senate Bill 78 echoes the historic 2020 military spouse legislation by Senate President Ferguson which eased application requirements for a service member, veteran, or military spouse who

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<sup>1</sup> Fiscal and Policy Note (Senate Bill 78). Department of Legislative Services, Maryland General Assembly. 2023 Session. [https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2023RS/fnotes/bil\\_0008/sb0078.pdf](https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2023RS/fnotes/bil_0008/sb0078.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See *supra* at 1.

applies for an occupational or professional license. The President’s bill, Chap 177, 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 similar improvements for occupations and professions governed by the health occupational boards.

In a letter to former Governor Hogan accompanying the Secretary of Defense’s 2019 report on military spouse licensure, the Department noted 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.*”<sup>3</sup> While Chapter 177 addressed such recommendation, it did not apply to the health occupations.

Licensure issues for both our transitioning military members and their spouses have been a priority for the Department for several years. The Department contracted with the Center for Research and Outreach (REACH) at the University of Minnesota, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperative Research, Education and Extension Service, to evaluate the outcome of DoD’s 2011 – 2016 efforts to improve license reciprocity for service members and military spouses.

The Center for REACH conducted a 50-State review of the laws enacted and an assessment of the approach taken by six occupational boards in each State to implement these laws.<sup>4</sup> Its State-by-State evaluation provides a basis for evaluating the impact of these laws, and specific recommendations for Maryland included passage of “*legislation that provides support for temporary licenses for military spouses licensed in another state as most boards do not offer a temporary license option for spouses.*”<sup>5</sup>

The Military Spouse License Portability Assessment was launched by the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Pennsylvania State University in 2021 to inform Department of Defense policy makers of the amount of time it takes military spouses to obtain an occupational license when they have an inter-state relocation due to a Permanent Change of Station.<sup>6</sup> Only one of the three health boards examined met the Department's baseline for military spouses to begin working within thirty days, and one board took over thirty days to process a license.<sup>7</sup> Their recommendations echoed the prior findings.

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Defense. *Military Spouse Licensure: State Best Practices and Strategies for Achieving Reciprocity*. November 2019. <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/military-spouse-licensure-report-2019.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Six occupations reviewed: cosmetology, dental hygiene, massage therapy, mental health counseling, occupational therapy, and real estate.

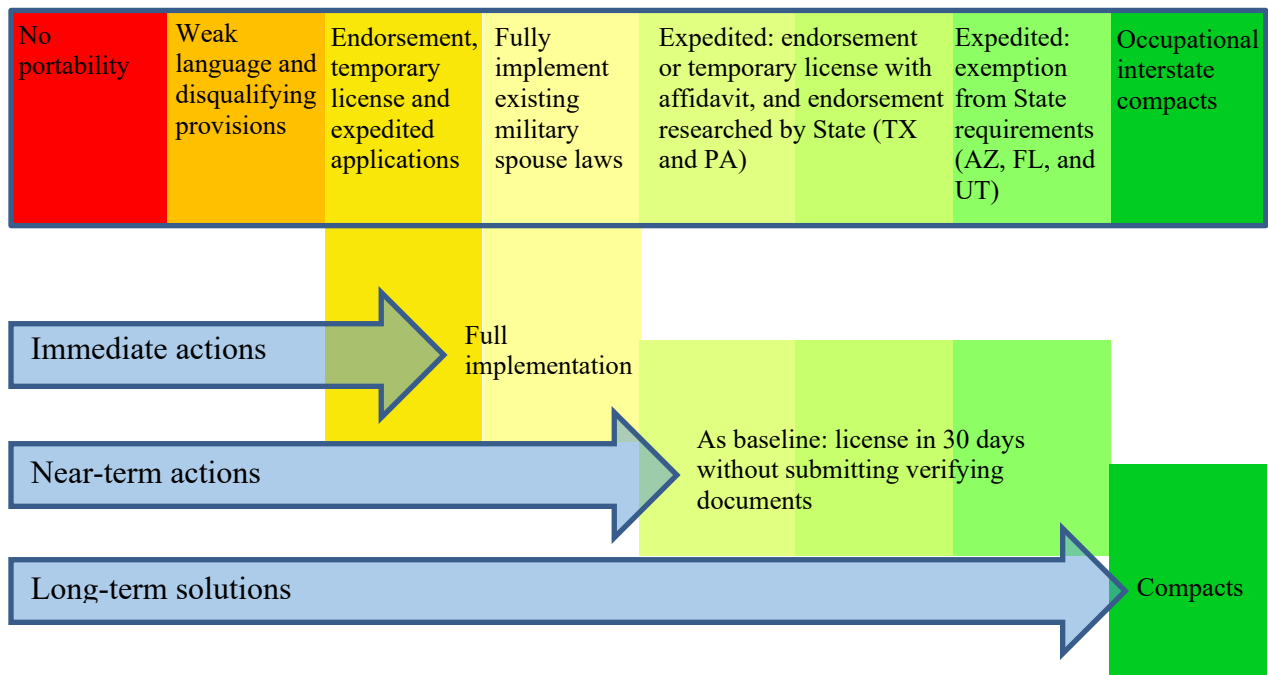
<sup>5</sup> Lynne M. Borden, PhD, Et al, “Military Spouse Licensure Portability Examination,” Center for Research and Outreach, University of Minnesota, <https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/research/document/13865>

<sup>6</sup> “Military Spouse License Portability Assessment.” Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness. <https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/mslp/>

<sup>7</sup> “Maryland.” Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness. [https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/mslp/state-findings/mslp\\_maryland.pdf](https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/mslp/state-findings/mslp_maryland.pdf)

Under federal law, the military departments are required to produce annual strategic basing scorecards, evaluating quality-of-life factors such as spouse licensure.<sup>8</sup> The Department of the Air Force evaluated Maryland “Amber” for seven of the nine occupations considered on its most recent assessment of the availability of license reciprocity.<sup>9</sup>

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:



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. How fast these actions and solutions can be approved and implemented is up to the States. The Department’s current

<sup>8</sup> Pub. L. 116–283, div. B, title XXVIII, §2883, Jan. 1, 2021, 134 Stat. 4370, provided that the Department and each of the military services to produce annual basing decision scorecards at the state and installation level considering military family readiness issues, including interstate portability of licensure credentials.

The secretaries must consider “*whether the State in which an installation subject to a basing decision is or will be located ... has entered into reciprocity agreements to recognize and accept professional and occupational licensure and certification credentials granted by or in other States or allows for the transfer of such licenses and certifications granted by or in other States.*” ( 10 U.S. Code § 1781b )

<sup>9</sup> Support of Military Families 2021. Department of the Air Force. [https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/2021SAF/09\\_Sept/External\\_CASH\\_single\\_map\\_file\\_v4.2.pdf](https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/2021SAF/09_Sept/External_CASH_single_map_file_v4.2.pdf)

evaluation of states, validated through the 2021 study conducted by Penn State University, indicates approximately 60 percent of states have achieved DoD criteria.<sup>10</sup>

In closing, we are grateful for the tremendous efforts that Maryland has historically made to support our uniformed service members and their families. We appreciate the opportunity to support the passage of the policies reflected in Senate Bill 78 and are especially grateful to Senator Jackson for introducing this important piece of legislation.

As always, as liaison to the Mid-Atlantic region, I stand ready to answer whatever questions you may have.

Yours etc.,

**CHRISTOPHER R. ARNOLD**  
Mid-Atlantic Region Liaison  
Defense-State Liaison Office

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<sup>10</sup> *See supra* at 7.