



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

January 30, 2023

Chairwoman Melanie Griffith
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

SUBJECT: Request for Favorable Report with Amendment – SB0078, Health Occupations - Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses - Temporary Licensure, Certification, Registration, and Permitting

Dear Chair Griffith and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Military Coalition, I am writing in support of SB 078, Temporary Licensure for Health Occupations. For the record, my name is Lynn Nash. I am a nurse and the Communications Director for the Coalition. I started out 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.

As an expert, I would like to provide background on this bill.

- SB 78, creates a temporary, expedited licensure process for service members, veterans, or military spouses.
- Maryland has **a duty to protect** those who receive care. It does this through licensing.
- [Licensing](#) is the process to grant permission to an individual to engage in practice after determining that the applicant has attained the **competency necessary to perform a unique scope of practice**.
- According to the [Goldwater Institute](#), the average military family moves every 2-3 years. For military spouses, these frequent relocations mean major disruptions in their careers.
- The [Chamber of Commerce](#) reports that **67% of military spouses had to quit a job because their spouse received change-of-station orders**.
- In their report "[Supporting our Military Families: Best Practices for Streamlining Occupational Licenses](#)", the Department of Labor and Defense estimate that unemployment rates for military spouse are **3 to 6 times greater than the national unemployment rate**, even though they **often have more experience and education**.
- The [Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse](#) University found that **50% of military spouses that work in fields that require occupational licenses**.

- To be eligible for employment, [military spouses in professions that require a license must navigate laws, policies, and regulations unique to each state](#).
- Applying for a new license every time that you relocate, is a **burdensome, expensive process**.
- **In the health occupations**, because there are 50 states, the District of Columbia and four territories, **EACH of the 55 localities have THEIR OWN, unique Practice Act** which govern what a person can do and EACH has **DIFFERENT** licensing processes.
- Navigating the [55 sets of requirements, rules, and fees](#), is a **SIGNIFICANT** challenge especially as all are **ALREADY LICENSED and in GOOD STANDING in another state**.
- As a result, the [Goldwater Institute](#) found that re-licensure hits military families who relocate so frequently the hardest, **ESPECIALLY HERE IN HIGH-COST-OF-LIVING MARYLAND**, where often both spouses need to work.
- 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. That is why [Defense has supported similar legislation for over 15 years](#) because they see the portability of licensure as a **readiness issue**.
- Every time service family moves, **the spouse often spends thousands of hours (and \$\$\$) to continue their career**.
- To apply for a license, the service member or spouse must:
 - Have a **valid license in another state that they have held for at least 1 year**;
 - Provide proof that EACH license held is valid, in good standing and has substantially similar qualifications;
 - **Remain in good standing** with the licensing authority that issued the previous license, and with every other licensing authority that has issued a license with a similar scope of practice to that person; **good standing = no complaints; and being active within 2 prior years**;
 - Provide a copy of the military orders to the new jurisdiction's licensing authority;
 - Complete an application and provide fingerprints and photos—this has an additional cost;
 - Submit to a national criminal history records check;
 - Agree to abide by the rules of the licensing authority in the new jurisdiction in terms of standards of practice, discipline and meeting any continuing education requirements
 - And, provide proof that they have submitted a complete application and paid all fees.
- Validation of the documentation **can be accomplished in real time, at no cost, over secure connections**.
- Yet, Professional Boards cannot process licensure request in a timely manner. Our own [Maryland Board of Nursing website](#) states: the **“Board of Nursing continues to experience delays in processing initial and renewal applications for licensure and certification due to information technology limitations, numerous vacant full-time positions, and decreased operational resources**.
- [Interstate compacts](#) allows applicants to have one multi-state license and the ability to practice in compact states.
- Compacts [create reciprocal professional licensing practices between states](#), while ensuring the quality and safety of services and safeguarding state sovereignty.
- [Compacts exist in](#) medicine, nursing, physical therapy, psychology, emergency medical services, audiology/speech-language pathology, licensed professional counseling and occupational therapy, just to name a few.
- **Only 38 states and the Virgin Islands currently recognize compact licenses**. Maryland is one of them, and in fact **was the first state to establish a nursing compact**.
- Maryland is experiencing a **critical shortage across the spectrum of health occupations**; the two highest shortage areas are **nursing and behavioral health**.

- As I write this, we continue to be in the throes of Covid. Of the 19 Counties and the City of Baltimore, **10 of 19 counties have [hospital bed occupancy rates](#) that are above 90%**; two counties have fewer than 50 beds total; and four have fewer than 100 beds.
- Often, it's not a shortage of beds geographically, but rather, a function of short staffing.

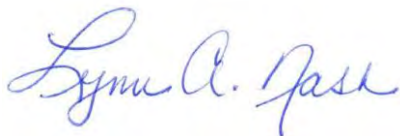
SB 78 mitigates these problems by allowing for a temporary, expedited licensure process, something that Maryland gravely needs. However, **I ask for two amendments.**

- First, remove the one-year application restriction for Veterans, especially if you want to improve the number of available practitioners.
- And second, that you require the establishment of same day, walk-through, temporary licensing, like five other states.

The Maryland Military Coalition, is a voluntary, non-partisan organization representing 19 veteran service organizations who, in turn, serve over 150,000 Maryland uniformed services men, women and their families. The Coalition ***strongly supports*** Senate Bill 0078 and asks for your ***favorable report with amendments.***

Thank you to Senator Jackson for sponsoring this important legislation and for amending the language in this year's bill to the more inclusive term of "uniformed service". Temporary licensure is one of our top 4 issues. We appreciate his leadership in this critical area and look forward to working with he and Delegate Crosby on this issue. We ask that you review the attached issue paper prior to your deliberation.

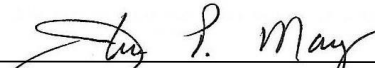
Respectfully,

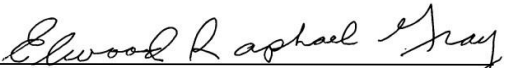
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lynn A. Nash". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lynn A. Nash, PhD, RN, PHCNS-BC, FAAN
CAPT (R), U.S. Public Health Service
Communications Director
Maryland Military Coalition

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition


Air Force Sergeants Association


American Military Society


American Minority Veterans Research Project

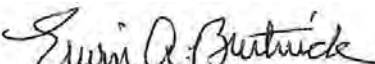

Association of the United States Navy



Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service

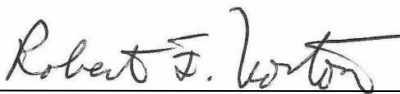

Disabled American Veterans



Distinguished Flying Cross Association


Fleet Reserve Association


Jewish War Veterans of the USA


Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'
Association


Military Officers Association of America


Military Order of the Purple Heart


Montford Point Marines of America


National Association for Black Veterans


Naval Enlisted Reserve Association


NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers


Reserve Organization of America


Society of Military Widows


Veterans of Foreign Wars



Issue #3

Expedited Temporary Professional Licensure for Active Duty/Spouses/Veterans

- Maryland has a duty to protect those who receive care. It does this through licensing.
- The **Maryland Board of Nursing continues to experience delays in processing** initial and renewal applications for licensure and certification due to information technology limitations, numerous vacant full-time positions, and decreased operational resources¹.
- The President signed the Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022 (HR7939), into federal law on January 5, 2023². Section 705A of the Act, “Portability of Professional Licenses of Servicemembers and Their Spouses” addresses “covered licenses” and states that if a servicemember or spouse relocates his or her residency **because of military orders** for military service to a location that is not in the jurisdiction of the licensing authority that issued the covered license, such covered license shall be considered valid at a similar scope of practice and in the discipline applied for in the jurisdiction of such new residency for the duration of such military orders”. The law³:
 - Amends Title VII of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. 4021 et seq.)
 - **Applies licensing reciprocity between states to all professions except the practice of law**
 - The spouse/service member must:
 - ✓ Provide a copy of the military orders to the new jurisdiction’s licensing authority;
 - ✓ Remain in good standing with the licensing authority that issued the previous license, and with every other licensing authority that has issued a license with a similar scope of practice to that person; good standing = no complaints; active within 2 prior years
 - ✓ Abide by the rules of the licensing authority in the new jurisdiction in terms of standards of practice, discipline and meeting any continuing education requirements
 - ✓ Submits to the authority of the licensing authority in the new jurisdiction for the purposes of standards of practice, discipline, and fulfillment of any continuing education requirements.
 - ✓ **NEW** language - If a licensure compact is in place, it takes precedence. 38 states and the Virgin Islands recognize nursing compact licenses. Other occupations have similar rates.
- The Department of Defense has supported similar legislation for over 15 years because they see the portability of licensure as a **readiness issue**.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports** HB0196 and SB0078, Temporary Licensure, introduced by Delegate Crosby and Senator Jackson, to help relocating service members, veterans, or military spouses get to work sooner. However, the Coalition asks for an **amendment** to remove the 1-year time restriction for Veterans.

¹ Maryland Board of Nursing. Retrieved from <https://mbon.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

² White House press release, January 5, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/legislation/2023/01/05/press-release-bills-signed-h-r-680-h-r-897-h-r-1082-h-r-1154-h-r-1917-h-r-7939-s-450-s-989-s-1294-s-1402-s-1541-s-1942-s-2333-s-2834-s-3168-s-3308-s-3405-s-35/>

³ HR7939, Sec. 705A Portability of Professional Licenses of Servicemembers and Their Spouses. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/7939/text#toc-H2476EF49A12E4D2CA12A1A8F95F96E38>