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HB 196 Health Occupations – Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses –
Temporary Licensure, Certification, Registration, and Permitting
Health and Government Operations
SUPPORT
16 February 2023

Good Afternoon Chairman Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. I am David Webber, Veteran, and resident of Annapolis, Maryland. AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in the state, encompassing over 850,000 members. **AARP MD overwhelmingly supports HB 196 Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses – Temporary Licensure, Certification, Registration, and Permitting.** We thank Delegate Crosby for sponsoring this bill.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities, and protection from financial abuse.

House Bill 196 generally requires each health occupations board to issue an expedited temporary license, certificate, registration, or permit to a service member, veteran, or military spouse who meets specified requirements. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) must: (1) by January 1, 2024 and annually thereafter, report on the processing of applications from service members, military spouses, and veterans, as specified, for the immediately preceding 12-month period; (2) publish prominently on the MDH website the information on each expedited licensing process and any assistance or other services available related to licensure, certification, or registration for service members, veterans, and military spouses.

As you may know this bill allows a service member, veteran, or military spouse to obtain an expedited temporary certification to work as a healthcare professional within the state of Maryland.

The state of Maryland is currently experiencing a mass vacancy in the healthcare industry, with a 50% increase in nursing vacancies within Maryland hospitals since 2021¹. As vacancies continue to grow within the hospitals of Maryland, the number of occupied beds is growing. Every county within the state has now hit at least 50% bed occupancy, and 10

¹ <https://thedailyrecord.com/2022/02/01/nursing-vacancies-in-md-have-reached-3900-officials-say/>

counties have now crossed the 90% occupancy threshold ². In order for a healthcare professional to receive a certification to operate within the state of Maryland they must undergo a grueling process of certification that can take over half of a year. Allowing service members, veterans, and spouses to receive an expedited temporary certification would vastly and rapidly alleviate some of the issues we see today in the healthcare landscape.

The average military family moves every 2-3 years. This means that individuals who have a healthcare occupation could potentially go months unemployed upon moving to Maryland. If this bill were to pass it would permit those service members, spouses, and families who depend on a dual income to thrive within the state of Maryland, rather than suffering for months while waiting on a certification.

AARP believes we must honor the service and acknowledge the sacrifice of our service members, veterans, and spouses. House Bill 196 does so, by providing greater economic viability to these groups, along with strengthening the healthcare system within the state.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report for House Bill 196. For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact Tammy Bresnahan, Associate State Director of Advocacy at tbresnahan@arp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.

² <https://data.rgj.com/covid-19-hospital-capacity/maryland/24/>