



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB 196: Health Occupations – Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses – Temporary Licensure, Certification, Registration, and Permitting**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and honorable members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. My name is Delegate Brian Crosby and it's an honor to present HB 196, entitled Health Occupations – Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses – Temporary Licensure, Certification, Registration, and Permitting.

I am presenting this bill with two amendments: one is to limit the bill to apply only to the spouses of active duty members, and the other states that the bill only applies in the event that a licensing board is unable to issue a license within 12 business days.

In 2020, the Maryland General Assembly unanimously passed HB 349, which provided reciprocity to service members, veterans, and military spouses for professional licenses overseen by the Department of Labor so long as an applicant maintained a corresponding license from another state in good standing. This bill follows in the spirit of that previous bill, by making it easier for the spouses of active duty members to practice health occupations in Maryland.

Under current State law, a health occupations board shall issue a full license, certificate, or registration to a service member, veteran, or military spouse within 15 business days. However, my office has heard many complaints that this deadline is not always met. Under the amended bill, the relevant health occupations board would be required to issue a temporary license to the spouses of active duty service members after the 12th business day.

Our state is currently home to approximately 29,000 active-duty members of the armed forces. When their families move to Maryland, they must rely on two incomes to support their families, as one is simply not enough for our high cost of living. For spouses who already maintain licenses in other states, the time required to recertify themselves in Maryland can be a lengthy and costly endeavor. HB 196 would cover professions overseen by the Health Department such as nurses, psychologists, dentists, and optometrists, among others. These are highly-skilled, critical professions for maintaining healthy Marylanders, and we should not prevent experienced medical professionals from practicing in our state.

Last session, I introduced this bill as HB 112. This bill differs from last year's bill in some key ways. First, this bill changes the definition of "service member" to match and track the Federal definition. Second, this bill requires that the license, certificate, registration, or permit already held by the applicant has "substantially similar qualifications" as the one they are applying for, which will be

determined by the Health Occupations Board. Third, this bill requires that the applicant's criminal background check already be completed in accordance with regulations by the Health Occupations Board. Finally, this bill outlines further specifications for the Health Occupations Board, such as implementing a procedure for applicants to be able to notify the Board that they are the spouse of a service member; providing an expedited process for applicants to receive their license; requiring Board representatives to assist applicants who do not meet requirements to obtain qualifications they need; mandating a report to the Maryland General Assembly which includes the volume of applications, reasons for delayed and unprocessed applications, and how the Board can further streamline their process; and finally, prominently publishing information about the expedited licensing process on the Board's website.

As stated earlier, I believe we should make the lives of our military families easier, not harder. I respectfully request a favorable report.