



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 13, 2024

Honorable Pamela G. Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

SB 409 – Health Occupations – Clinical Marriage and Family Therapists – Reciprocal Licensure Requirements - Request for a FAVORABLE Report

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Military Coalition and as its Communications Director, I am providing written testimony in support of SB 409, Reciprocal Licensure. As a licensed healthcare professional, I am well aware of the burdensome challenge of reapplying for credentials when I made each of my permanent change of station moves—applying took lots of time and money.

This bill authorizes licensure reciprocity for Marriage and Family Therapists who are licensed in another state—a skill set that we are critically short of in Maryland. This legislation improves license portability and employment by reducing the burden of holding multiple licenses. Such license reciprocity may enable employment of persons living in nearby states, and would certainly be welcomed by our service member families.

Maryland is home to 34,444 active-duty service members, 14,292 active-duty spouses and 25,642 reservists/national guard members with 28,019 family members¹. These are Department of Defense numbers and do not reflect the 1,200 U.S. Public Health Service or NOAA officers and their families, who also live with similar duty situations. In addition, there are 355,787 veteran households².

Military spouses have long faced employment challenges, with an unwavering unemployment rate of 22%³ compared to our local rate of 1.8%. Most spouses need to work. Fifty percent work in an occupation that requires licensure or certification. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of active-duty spouses had to leave their last job because of a permanent change of station move⁴. On average, they earn 26.8% less in income than

¹ [Military One Source](#), as of December 31, 2022

² [VA Claim Insider](#), August 10, 2023

³ 2021 [DoD Survey of Active-Duty Spouses](#)

⁴ [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation – The Hidden Financial Costs of Military Spouse Unemployment](#)

SB 409 – Marriage and Family Therapists Licensure Reciprocity- Favorable

their non-military counterparts because of the frequent moves. The average time to find a job for a military spouse is 19 weeks, **OR \$12,374 per year in lost wages** trying to relicense and/or find work in the new state⁵.

The average service family moves every two to three years⁶ and for a service spouse it means getting another license before they can work. Here in Maryland, our high cost of living means that for most families, especially for our uniformed service families, having two incomes *is critical*. Time lost seeking a new job and a new occupational license creates economic challenges for our military families, not only in the near term, but the cumulative effect is that they often cannot plan for, save for, and be ready for retirement. Often the difficulty for spouses staying employed is one of the main reasons that service members decide **NOT** to re-enlist.

License reciprocity **for marriage and family therapists improves public access in a critical shortage area**, by reducing overly burdensome and duplicative requirements associated with holding multiple licenses. Reciprocity preserves the regulatory authority of States to protect public health and safety through the current system of State licensure. It lowers expenses and gets the applicant working sooner – a real benefit to our service families, who often experience struggles associated with the nature of “the job”—frequent relocations, frequent deployments, long hours, tight finances and sole parenting when the spouse is away.

And....in this fiscal climate, this legislation is procedural and does not directly affect government finances.

The Maryland Military Coalition, is a voluntary, non-partisan organization representing 21 veteran service organizations who, in turn, serve over 150,000 Maryland uniformed services men and women and their families. The Coalition **strongly supports** SB 409 – **Marriage and Family Therapists Licensure Reciprocity** and asks for your **FAVORABLE report**.

Thank you to Senator Hayes for sponsoring this important legislation.

Respectfully,



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

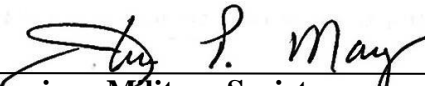
Maryland Military Coalition Member Organizations Follow

⁵ [National Military Family Association Data](#)

⁶ [Goldwater Institute, Breaking Down Barriers to Work](#)

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition


Air Force Sergeants Association


American Military Society

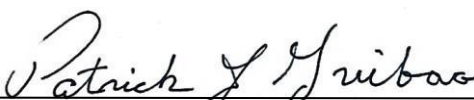

American Minority Veterans Research Project


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