



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 1, 2024

Honorable Josephine Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

HB 034 – Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact - Request for Favorable Report

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

On behalf of the Maryland Military Coalition, and as its Communications Director, I am submitting testimony in favor of this bill. The Interstate Social Work Licensure compact that you are considering is sponsored by the Council of State Governments, the Department of Defense and the Association of Social Work Boards to support the mobility of licensed social workers. The compact allows social workers to practice in any state that accepts the compact. The **compact has already been enacted in Kentucky; and is currently being considered in twenty-one other states in addition to Maryland.** Approving this compact will provide an additional licensing pathway by creating license reciprocity among the participating states, reducing barriers to portability and employment especially for our service members and their families.

Currently, there are nine additional compacts in Medicine, Registered Nurses, Physical Therapist, Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, Occupational Therapy, Psychology, and Counseling. There is work underway to establish an interstate compact for Advance Practice Nurses and Cosmetologists which also have legislation sponsored here in Maryland this year.

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. 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. 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 their non-military counterparts because of

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](#)

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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 military family moves every two to three years⁶ and for a social worker 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.

The purpose of this compact is to facilitate the interstate practice and regulation of social workers to **improve public access to competent Social Work Services**, by reducing overly burdensome and duplicative requirements associated with holding multiple licenses. The Compact preserves the regulatory authority of States to protect public health and safety through the current system of State licensure, and it lowers expenses and gets the applicant back to work sooner – a real benefit to our service families.

The Defense-State Liaison Office has been pursuing license portability for over 16 years. Military Spouse Employment and Economic Opportunities are tracked and lists a total of 16 compacts by state. The DSLO tracker for Maryland⁷ shows that Maryland has yet to enact Interstate Social Work License Compact legislation. To date, **Maryland has enacted compact legislation for nurses, licensed profession counselors, occupational therapists and physical therapists.**

Of note, this bill is **DIFFERENT** from the **Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022** (HR7939), which the President signed into federal law on January 5, 2023⁸. 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 duty 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 law:

- 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

Here in Maryland, a service spouse applying under the Act is issued a letter of endorsement, not an actual Maryland license. The Maryland Department of Labor’s webpage⁹ states “Please be advised that this is NOT an application for permanent licensure or certification in the State of Maryland. Rather, this is an application for an official letter of recognition that will allow you to

⁵ [National Military Family Association Data](#)

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

⁷ [Military State Policy - Maryland](#)

⁸ [HR7939, Sec. 705A Portability of Professional Licenses of Servicemembers and Their Spouses.](#)

⁹ [Maryland Department of Labor, Active Duty Military Servicemember or Spouse License Recognition Application](#)

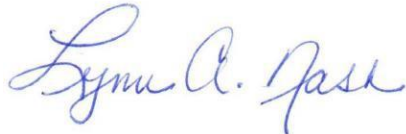
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practice”. Many inspection organizations, such as the Joint Committee on the Accreditation of Hospitals, do not regard an endorsement as meeting the requirements for an in-state or compact license, creating issues for the spouse and employer. Holding a multi-state compact license avoids this complication.

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* House Bill 034 – Interstate Social Work License Compact and asks for your **favorable report**.

Thank you to Delegates Kerr for sponsoring this important legislation.

Respectfully,

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

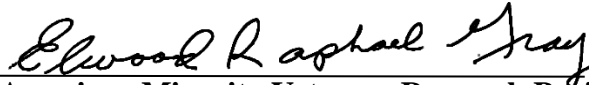
Lynn A. Nash, PhD, RN, PHCNS-BC, FAAN
CAPT (R), U.S. Public Health Service Communications Director

Maryland Military Coalition Member Organizations Follow

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition


Air Force Sergeants Association


American Military Society


American Minority Veterans Research Project

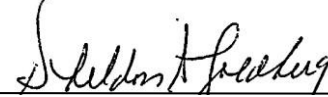

Association of the United States Navy



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


Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce


Military Officers Association of America


Military Order of the Purple Heart

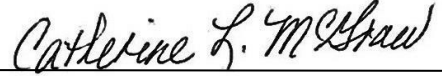

Montford Point Marines of America



National Association for Black Veterans


Naval Enlisted Reserve Association


NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers


Reserve Organization of America


Society of Military Widows


National Active and Retired Federal Employees
Veterans Affairs Directorate, NARFE MD


Veterans of Foreign Wars