



MANPOWER AND
RESERVE AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

February 6, 2024

Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, House Committee on Health & Government Operations
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Remarks of
Christopher R. Arnold
Mid-Atlantic Region Liaison
United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office

Support of: HB 425 – AN ACT Entering into the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Compact

Testimony

Madame Chair and honorable committee members, the Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to support the policies reflected in Maryland House Bill 425, which will improve access to care and allow military personnel and spouses to more easily maintain their certifications when relocating.

My name is Christopher Arnold. I am the Mid-Atlantic Region Liaison at the United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. We represent the Department and establish relationships with state leaders across the country who are concerned for troops and their families' welfare by harmonizing state and federal law and regulation on policy problems of national significance. These are identified by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, and the National Guard Bureau as areas where states can play a crucial role.

The APRN Compact allows an advanced practice registered nurse to hold one multistate license with a privilege to practice in other compact states. This is significant for the military community in that along with active-duty military spouses receiving the benefit of compacts, active-duty members, members of the reserve component, reserve component spouses, transitioning Service members and other Veterans benefit from the mobility provided through the compact.

The compact encourages the cooperation of party states in the areas of APRN licensure and regulation, facilitates the exchange of information between party states in the areas of APRN regulation, investigation and adverse actions and decreases redundancies in the consideration and issuance of APRN licensure.

An APRN multistate license is recognized as authorizing the APRN to practice in each party state, under a multistate licensure privilege, in the same role and population focus as in the home state. An individual may still apply for a single-state license, instead of a multistate license.

Professional licensure has been an enduring problem for military spouses. Obtaining a license in a new State can be both time consuming and expensive, and military spouses often cannot adequately anticipate how to prepare for licensure in a new State due to the unpredictable nature of military moves. The short duration of military assignments, coupled with lengthy relicensing processes, can discourage military spouses from seeking relicensure, causing them to quit an occupation or causing military families to leave the military.

The Department of Defense pivoted in its approach toward licensure after 2017 to consider occupational license compacts as another alternative to improve portability for military spouses. Compacts establish common understanding of competency and its measurement within the occupation, and then seek to have States approve the compact through legislation.

The Secretaries of the Military Departments have made the importance of military spouse licensure explicitly clear as they consider state's participation in interstate licensing compacts when evaluating future basing or mission alternatives. In 2018, the secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air force issued a policy memorandum to the National Governor's Association noting they will consider the quality of schools near bases and whether reciprocity of professional licenses is available for military families when evaluating future basing or mission alternatives.¹ This consideration was codified by Congress as a requirement in the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act.²

Compacts can provide seamless reciprocity for military spouses in an occupation. Barriers to the transfer and acceptance of certifications and licenses that occur when state rules differ can have a dramatic and negative effect on the financial well-being of military families. The APRN Compact will come into effect once seven states have enacted the legislation.³ As one of the first states to consider entering into the APRN Compact, Maryland is poised to play a founding role in developing the compact.

The coronavirus pandemic demonstrates that interstate licensure compacts such as APRN Compact can provide a permanent solution to leverage underutilized medical talent to meet labor shortages in high-need areas. The APRN Compact will assist Maryland military spouse nurses practicing both in and out-of-state, while improving the quality of care in the Old Line State.

¹ United States Department of Defense, "Service secretaries say quality of schools, reciprocity of licenses should be considered in future basing decisions." February 23, 2018. <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/1449706/service-secretaries-say-quality-of-schools-reciprocity-of-licenses-should-be-co/>

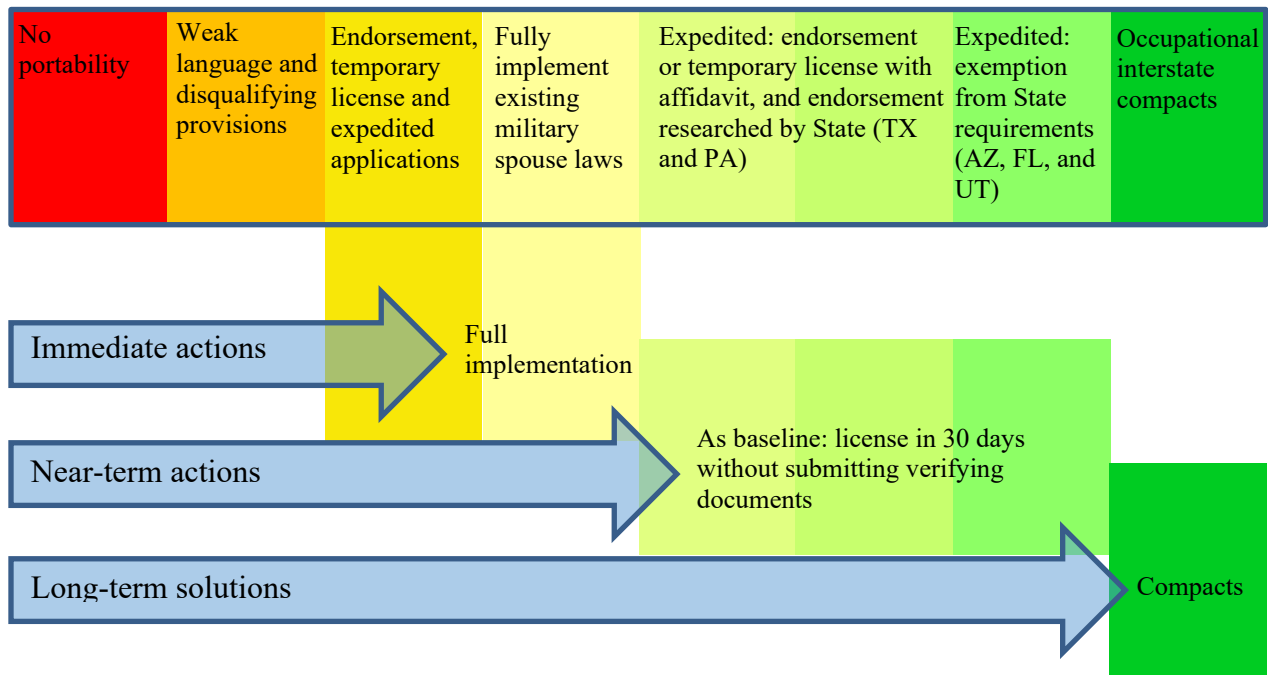
² Notably, §2883(h) requires the Department and each of the military services to produce annual basing decision scorecards at the state and installation level considering military family readiness issues, including interstate portability of licensure credentials.

The secretaries must consider "*whether the State in which an installation subject to a basing decision is or will be located ... has entered into reciprocity agreements to recognize and accept professional and occupational licensure and certification credentials granted by or in other States or allows for the transfer of such licenses and certifications granted by or in other States.*" (*Id.* (b))

³ The compact was introduced in mid-2021 and passed by North Dakota, and Delaware. In addition to Maryland, legislation is currently pending in Utah.

In addition to supporting the drafting of model compacts laws for professions, 10 § U.S.C. 1784(h) authorizes DoD to support professions with developing database systems to make the compacts more efficient and operational. These database systems allow States to share information about practitioners using compact provisions to work in member States.⁴

The Department encourages States to engage in immediate actions to fully implement military spouse licensure laws, near-term actions to at least attain a baseline of getting military spouses a license in thirty (30) days based on minimal documentation, and removing substantially equivalent language; and long-term solutions for reciprocity through compacts:



Maryland has already enacted and joined the Audiology/Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact, the Licensed Professional Counseling Compact, the Nurse Licensure Compact, the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact, the Physical Therapy Licensure Compact, and the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact.

In closing, we are grateful for the tremendous efforts that the Old Line State has historically made to support our service members and their families. We appreciate the opportunity to support these policies and grateful to the sponsor, Delegate Rosenberg, the many cosponsors, and

⁴ The current effort to develop compacts through a cooperative agreement and to approve compacts is a collaboration between the federal government, state governments and non-governmental organizations representing professionals and state licensing boards. Through this collaborative effort, all practitioners within a profession will have greater mobility while sustaining the focus on assuring public safety through licensure. This is significant for the military community in that along with active duty military spouses receiving the benefit of compacts, active duty members, members of the reserve component, reserve component spouses, transitioning Service members and other Veterans benefit from the mobility provided through compacts.

the members of the Maryland House Veterans caucus for their leadership and dedication to supporting our service members and their families.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these issues. As always, as Mid-Atlantic Region Liaison, I stand ready to assist and answer whatever questions you may have.

Yours etc.,

CHRISTOPHER R. ARNOLD

Mid-Atlantic Region Liaison

Defense-State Liaison Office