

Chair Pena-Melynk and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to support HB 602 - which would empower the Board of Nursing to pursue reciprocity with surrounding states and territories. I am here today to speak to you as a certified nurse practitioner and a military spouse.

As of December 31, 2022, Maryland was home to approximately 14,292 active-duty military spouses. Approximately 19% of employed military spouses work in health-related services, which includes professions such as nursing. Like me - many of these military spouses are advanced practice registered nurses.

While Maryland has prioritized expedited licensure for military spouses since 2015, the administrative burden for both military spouses and the board of nursing remains high. The time to licensure is expedited, but the application process is not. As the applicant I still have to submit proof of education, certification, licensure, etc. in order to pursue a Maryland license. This requires me to pay for all college transcripts - up to \$50, and board certifications - \$40, verification of all my current and previous nursing licenses through nursys - \$30 per license, fingerprinting for a background check - \$50 dollars and the application fee to the Maryland Board of Nursing -\$100 for the RN and \$50 for the nurse practitioner certification.

The military spouse relief act of 2023 states that "Such covered licenses shall be considered valid at a similar scope of practice." While this is promising for many military spouses who are in licensed professions, this is gray for nurse practitioners as scope is not standardized across the US. If my home state license is considered a restricted state for practice, will that license be recognized in Maryland - a full practice authority state?

There are 44 military installations between DC, Maryland, and Virginia. The likelihood of being stationed in one state and then transferred to another base in the immediate area is high. If I move from Maryland to Virginia, I may have to repeat the process I described to you - transcripts, certification, background check, verification of licenses, etc. This would not be a requirement if Maryland enters into reciprocal agreements with surrounding states and territories. Reciprocity allows for truly expedited licensure because the board understands that another approved board has already vetted the provider.

As you can see, reciprocity reduces the administrative burden of the board and the applicant - while ensuring public safety.

I urge a favorable report of HB 602 and welcome any questions.

Respectfully,

Naila Russell DNP, FNP-BC