



MANPOWER AND
RESERVE AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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

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Chairman Brenda Landwehr
Chair, House Committee on Health and Human Services

Remarks of
Michelle Richart
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United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office

Support of: HB 2288 – Enacting the counseling compact to provide for interstate privileges for professional counselors.

Testimony

Chairman Landwehr and honorable Committee members, the Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to support the policies reflected in House Bill 2288, a bill relating to the counseling profession for military spouses.

My name is Michelle Richart. I am an active duty military spouse and the Midwest Regional 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 Licensed Professional Counselor Compact (LPCC) seeks to eliminate barriers to interstate professional counseling practice, improve patient access to professional counseling services, and enhance public protection through a shared interstate licensure data system. Of additional benefit is the compact's utilization of a mutual recognition model of interstate practice, which enhances opportunities of portable careers for military spouses by providing consistent rules which allow licensed members to work in other states through "privilege to practice policies", or more easily transfer their license to a new state.

Military families move every three years on average. LPCC helps military spouses relocate and begin work without delay by reducing the amount of time and effort needed to gain authorization to practice in a new state, even as compared to expedited licensure laws for military spouses.

I became a Regional Liaison due to of my personal experience as a military spouse and family member and my passion for quality-of-life issues confronting military families. As a military spouse of 17 years and having an occupation which requires a license, I can personally attest to the difficulties being addressed today and how not being able to work in my career field has

negatively impacted my family. Compacts like the one being addressed today allow for financial stability, facilitate placement opportunities, increase the speed in which a military family can assimilate into its new location, create a desirable new employee pool for the state, and maintain a family's well-being. Spouse employment continues to remain one of the DoD's top military family issues with approximately one-third of working military spouses requiring a state license.

Interstate compacts offer an opportunity to standardize qualifications for interstate transfer, which alleviates confusion for military spouses transferring between member states, and also allows licensing boards to simplify their process for assuring the qualifications of visiting professionals. Compacts can offer license portability for military spouses and increase the availability of critical professionals in short supply.

We thank Representative Ruiz for introducing this legislation and thank the Committee for considering this important legislation. We are especially grateful for the tremendous efforts Kansas has historically made in supporting our service members and their families. In previous sessions, Kansas has passed compacts relating to audiology/speech-language pathology, emergency medical services, nursing, and psychological services. Joining LPCC will improve access to resources and allow military personnel and spouses to more easily maintain their certifications when relocating. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have.

Very Respectfully,

MICHELLE RICHART
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Defense-State Liaison Office