

**Senate Committee on Commerce**

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 2745- Waiving licensing fees for military spouses**

**Presented by Eric Stafford, VP of Government Affairs, Kansas Chamber**

**Wednesday, March 13, 2024**

Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Kansas Chamber. The Kansas Chamber represents small, medium and large businesses of all industry segments across the state. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2745, which would waive licensing and registration fees for military spouses.

Kansas has made significant strides in improving the state's occupational licensure climate with the legislature passing House Bill 2066, which built on the occupational licensing reciprocity statutes for military spouses. HB 2745 makes another positive change by proposing to exempt military spouses from licensure and registration fees associated with licensure in the state.

In 2020, the United States Department of Defense released a report titled "Military Spouse Licensure: State Best Practices and Strategies for Achieving Reciprocity." According to DOD, military spouses face an unemployment rate of 24%, significantly higher than the national unemployment rate. This discrepancy is due to the high mobility rate of military life. According to a DOD news release, "Implementing licensure portability measures will help to reduce employment barriers for military spouses, improving military family stability and quality of life," said Marcus Beauregard, director for the department's defense-state liaison office."

House Bill 2745 is another positive step in helping military families adjust to life in Kansas. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2745 and I'm happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.