

ASPIRE

Alliance for States Providing Interoperable Reciprocity

House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development
Wednesday, February 15, 2023
HB 2388

Colton Gibson - ASPIRE
Proponent Testimony in support of HB 2388

Chairman Tarwater and members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing ASPIRE to provide testimony in support of HB2388, which would amend HB2066, the occupational licensure reform bill of 2021, making Kansas the first in the country to stand up a digital infrastructure for military reciprocity and centralize licensing for professionals.

ASPIRE is a coalition of defense and Veteran and Military Spouse organizations, elected officials, and the private sector launched in October 2022 to reform state licensing and credential reciprocity laws to support the needs of military families. These leading organizations include Blue Star Families, The National Military Spouse Network, The Association of the United States Army (AUSA), Veterans Health and Wellness Foundation, and Women Veterans Interactive Foundation.

The coalition facilitates states support for military spouses, veterans, and national guard and reserve service members with interoperable digital credentials in creating employment efficiencies, speeding the hiring process, and propelling economic competitiveness

Sixteen states have passed laws similar to HB2066 that passed in Kansas, though no state has succeeded in accomplishing true reciprocity or operationalized such laws due to the complexity of licensing and credentialing systems across the country. An additional barrier in Kansas that many states have already addressed is our decentralized licensing system -- all of Kansas' licensing bodies are independent of one another.

When a military servicemember is given a PCS (Permanent Change of Station) order, the recertification process remains unwieldy for families; thus, leading to an unnecessary loss of household income(s) and adverse impacts on the state economies.

HB2388 would directly support military spouse employment opportunities through a **digital infrastructure for license and credential reciprocity**.

Additionally, Kansas' licensing system would be brought into the 21st century with a centralized, electronic credential data management system with instantaneous credential verification and an auditable record -- all of which don't currently exist in Kansas.

Dr. Arthur Laffer's research firm, Laffer Associates, conducted an economic impact assessment of labor market efficiencies, specifically the economic benefits that can be realized by drastically shortening the length of time it takes to start a new job ("the 42 day problem"), either from unemployment or relocation.

This is an issue that disproportionately impacts **military spouses**, who are more likely to require an occupational license to work, and more frequently move across state lines. While Kansas has good policy in place to expedite licensure for military spouses, there is no operating system to enable Boards and Commissions to meet the challenge.

Even in today's low-unemployment environment, this still represents a \$540 million problem for the State of Kansas.

According to a research study by Embold Research, more than 1 in 5 Americans works in an industry that requires a state-issued occupational license, and, for military spouses it is 1 in 3.

The annual percentage of the military spouse population that moves across state lines is 14.5% — compared to 1.1% for civilian spouses.

Lastly, 1 in 5 credentialed military spouses face challenges maintaining their licenses. This has a detrimental effect on military spouses, who are 30% more likely than civilians to have a state license, contributing to the fact that 35% of military spouses are underemployed.

The ASPIRE coalition stands in support of HB2388 and thanks the committee for their work on this bill. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Colton Gibson
ASPIRE