

Good afternoon Representative Will Carpenter and other members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Allyson Baloga, and I am a school psychology graduate student at Fort Hays State University. Thank you to the Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development for introducing House Bill 2069, enacting the school psychologist licensure compact to provide interstate practice privileges for school psychologists, and to this Committee for allowing me to share why I support this legislation.

I currently reside on Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota. I grew up in Wichita, KS and my husband's first duty station was McConnell Air Force Base so our connection to Kansas remains deep. My husband, Senior Master Sergeant Benjamin Baloga, is in his 17th year of service as an active-duty Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician in the Air Force. Because of my husband's military career, I have firsthand experience in how moving can affect my ability to maintain professional continuity across states because of military permanent change of station. My university is in Kansas; much of my core coursework was completed while being stationed in Alaska; my practicum is being completed in Minot, North Dakota; and we are currently awaiting orders, so it is likely that I will complete my internship in a fourth state.

My husband plans several more years of service and my hope is that I am able to carry my school psychology practice to every state where we are stationed. Currently, I will have to apply for credentialing in each state we move to, while also likely maintaining each of those credentials because we are not guaranteed specific assignment locations. There is a national shortage of school psychologists, and this compact would significantly contribute to reducing the burden military affiliated school psychologists have in obtaining credentialing when spouses are ordered to a new duty station, which would allow us to more easily be a part of reducing that shortage. Without this bill, military spouses will continue to face hurdles that can prevent us from being a part of the multi-faceted solutions to reducing school psychology shortages.

The Interstate Compact for School Psychologists would significantly benefit our state, and me personally as a school psychologist. Importantly, this Compact promotes efficiency while upholding a high standard of school psychology practice by ensuring that school psychologists practicing under the compact are maintaining licensure standards in a state with requirements that align with the National Association of School Psychologists standards, such as our licensure requirements here in Kansas.

This legislation benefits our military families, just like me and my family, and enables military connected school psychologists to easily continue in their career following a permanent change of station. Not only does this legislation benefit school psychologists with military connections, but it also has the potential to further support military children. From the Department of Defense, there are more than 1.6 million military children, and families move on average every 2 to 3 years. Personally, my children have learning disabilities and have benefited from special education. Moving with their need for specialized instruction would be eased by having school psychologists who share lived military life experiences and can provide specific understanding of the complex needs that military families face in education.

I urge you to support this legislation. Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.