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**Connecticut General Assembly
General Law Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3500
Hartford, CT 06106**

**Senator James J. Maroney, Co-Chair
Representative Michael D'Agostino, Co-Chair**

**Remarks of
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United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office**

Support of: HB6445 - An act expanding economic opportunity in occupations licensed by the department of consumer protection.

Testimony

The Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to offer its strongest possible endorsement of the policies set forth in House Bill 6445, to implement the Governor's budget recommendations.

My name is Christopher Arnold. I am the northeast region liaison at the DoD-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 Secretaries of the Military Departments have made the importance of military spouse licensure explicitly clear as they consider the availability of license reciprocity when evaluating future basing or mission alternatives. A 2015 DoD Office of Economic Adjustment Study found the value of defense spending to be \$9.7 billion, or 3.8% of the state GDP.¹

In a letter to Governor Lamont accompanying the Secretary of Defense's 2019 report on spouse licensure, the Department noted that "*Connecticut enacted legislation to accommodate transitioning Service members, but has depended on the laws, policies and practices used to accommodate all licensed practitioners coming into the State to facilitate licensure for military*

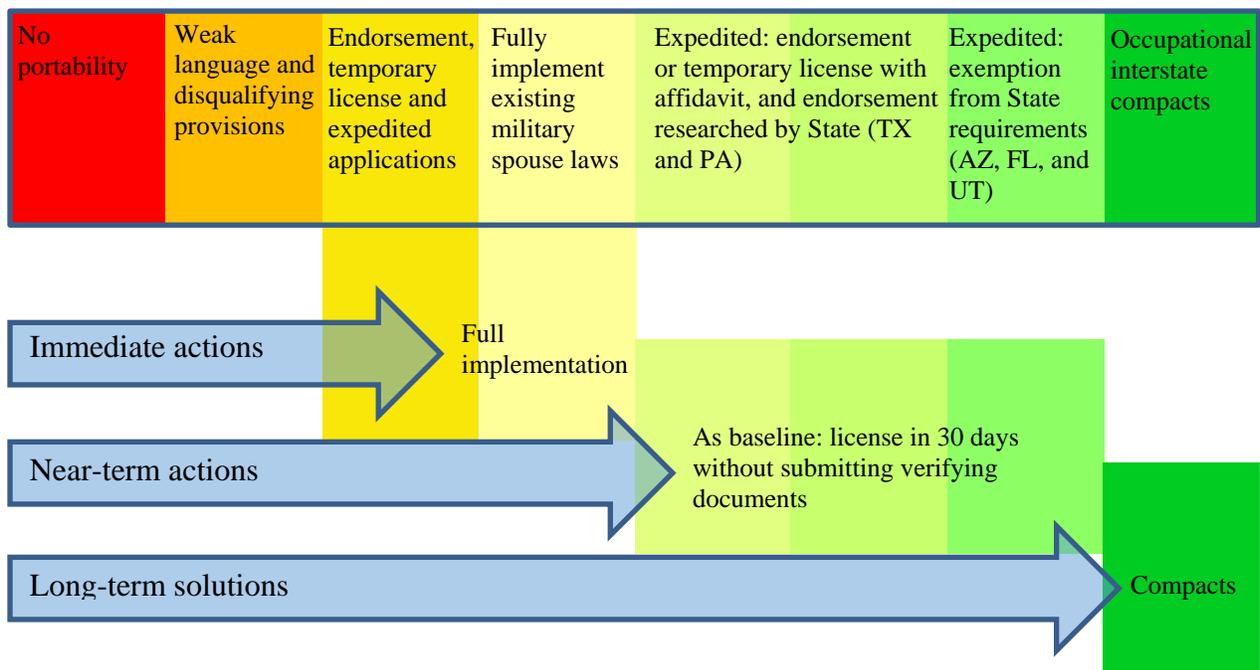
¹ Jennifer Schultz, Military's Impact on State Economies Webpage, National Conference of State Legislatures Website, April 9, 2018: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/military-and-veterans-affairs/military-s-impact-on-state-economies.aspx>

spouses. These temporary licensing and endorsement practices may be sufficient for the usual tempo of interstate mobility, but have proven inadequate for military spouses.”² This bill seeks to address such recommendation through near-term actions.

Occupational licensure has been an enduring problem for military spouses. Obtaining a license in a new State can be both time consuming and expensive, and military spouses often cannot adequately anticipate how to prepare for licensure in a new State due to the unpredictable nature of military moves. The short duration of military assignments, coupled with lengthy relicensing processes, can discourage military spouses from seeking relicensure, causing them to quit an occupation or causing military families to leave the military.

Further changes to licensure to facilitate reciprocity in State licensure programs for military spouses will continue to take time to cover all occupations in all States. Complicating matters further, the term “reciprocity” is used differently among the States. The continuum of reciprocity related programs is represented graphically below. The continuum goes from red, representing little to no portability, to dark green, representing the DoD’s optimum state of full reciprocity.

Understanding that military spouses need assistance now, and that many States have already committed to a variety of approaches, the Department advocates that States should pursue multiple approaches to reciprocity simultaneously. Available alternatives can be categorized as being more immediately attainable, achievable within the near-term, or obtainable in the long-term:



² Department of Defense. *Military Spouse Licensure: State Best Practices and Strategies for Achieving Reciprocity*. November 2019. Retrieved from <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/military-spouse-licensure-report-2019.pdf>

The Department encourages States to engage in immediate actions to fully implement military spouse licensure laws, near-term actions to at least attain a baseline of getting military spouses a license in 30 days based on minimal documentation, and removing substantially equivalent language; and long-term solutions for reciprocity through compacts.

As noted by the 2019 report, “Military spouses are a cross-section of the American population, although a greater percentage of them are in licensed occupations than their civilian counterparts,³ and they are significantly more mobile.⁴ Although recognized by States as an important aspect of their ongoing relationship with the military community, occupational licensure has been an enduring problem for military spouses, as illustrated by the following statement made by a DoD witness at a congressional hearing in 2004:

“Barriers to the transfer and acceptance of certifications and licenses that occur when State rules differ can have a dramatic and negative effect on the financial well-being of military families. Military spouses routinely lose 6 to 9 months of income during a military move as they try to reinstate their careers. And, as with civilian families, military families depend more and more on two incomes. Differences in licensure requirements across States limit advancement or deter reentry into the work force at a new location. Removing these barriers, creating reciprocity in licensing requirements, and facilitating placement opportunities can help a military family’s financial stability, speed the assimilation of the family into its new location, and create a desirable new employee pool for a State (especially in education and health care).”⁵

This statement is still applicable. Input from military spouses about their difficulties regarding licensure can be summarized as follows:⁶

- Obtaining a license in a new State can be both time consuming and expensive; competency standards and methods of measuring competency vary from State-to-State. For example:
 - Verifying credentials can require requesting transcripts and descriptions of course work, certified copies of scores on tests, documentation for practicum hours, and

³ 34 percent of active duty spouses self-identified as needing a State issued license to work (2017 Survey of Active Duty (Active Component) Spouses, Tabulations of Responses; Office of People Analytics Report No. 2018-006, May 2018), compared to 30 percent of the civilian population (The Hamilton Project, Brookings Institute, https://www.hamiltonproject.org/charts/percent_of_occupations_requiring_a_license_by_state)

⁴ “Military spouses are 10 times more likely to move across State lines than their civilian counterparts,” “Supporting Our Military Families: Best Practices for Streamlining Occupational Licensing Across State Lines,” U.S. Department of Treasury and U.S. Department of Defense, February 2012, page 7.

⁵ Department of Defense written testimony for the Joint Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Children and Families of the Committee On Health, Education, Labor, And Pensions, United States Senate, and the Subcommittee on Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, One Hundred Eighth Congress, Second Session, on examining how States have responded to military families’ unique challenges during military deployments and what the federal government can do to support States in this important work, July 21, 2004.

⁶ “Report on Barriers to Portability of Occupational Licenses Between States” DoD and DHS Report to Congress, March 2018, pages 5-6.

certified copies of previously held licenses (to include paying associated transcript fees and postage).

- State boards may require an applicant to take a licensing test or complete additional school coursework.
- In occupations that have entry and master level licenses, military spouses may have to accept a license at a lower status than they had achieved in a previous State, requiring them to seek less productive employment at a lower salary.
- Military spouses who have maintained a successful career express frustration over having to justify their credibility and competency in the same manner as first-time applicants.
- To alleviate potential hurdles, such as retesting and resubmitting source documents, military spouses may opt to maintain licenses in multiple States. Maintaining additional licenses can require renewal applications and fees, varying levels of continuing education credits, and generally additional unwarranted administrative burdens.

The short duration of a military spouse’s stay in a State, coupled with lengthy relicensing requirements, can be sufficiently discouraging to prompt a military spouse to quit an occupation or cause a military family to leave the military. The former outcome can be costly for the military family and the latter circumstance can be costly for the Service, as well as for the military family. Neither outcome is satisfactory.”⁷

Military spouses are far more educated and trained than their civilian counterparts, yet on average, earn 25 percent less than their civilian counterparts.⁸ The Secretary of Defense has established military spouse employment as a key aspect of supporting military families, and the Secretaries of the Military Departments have also expressed the importance of military spouse licensure by making it part of the consideration for future mission basing. How fast these actions and solutions can be approved and implemented is up to the States.

In closing, we are grateful for the tremendous efforts that Connecticut has historically made to support our military members and their families. We appreciate the opportunity to support the policy reflected in HB6445 and are especially grateful to the Governor for introducing this important piece of legislation. Thank you for taking the time to consider this issue. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Yours etc.,

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⁷ See *supra* at 2.

⁸ Hiring Our Heroes. *Military Spouses in the Workplace. Understanding the Impacts of Spouse Unemployment on Military Recruitment, Retention and Readiness*. June 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Military%20Spouses%20in%20the%20Workplace.pdf>