



**March 3, 2021**  
**House Education Committee**  
**SB 2175**

**Katie Ralston, Director of Workforce Division, ND Department of Commerce**

Hello, Chairman Owens and members of the House Education Committee. My name is Katie Ralston, and I have served as the director of the workforce division at the North Dakota Department of Commerce since January 2020. In my role, I also have the great pleasure of serving as the director of the industry-led Workforce Development Council. I'm here to share some information related the report to Commerce listed in SB 2175.

In the 66<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, SB 2306 included that licensing boards and commissions must submit a report to the Department of Commerce by August 2020. We leveraged a subcommittee of the Workforce Development Council made up of legislators and a cross-functional group of representatives of those affected by North Dakota's occupational licensing framework, including the business community and populations with barriers to employment, such as those with criminal backgrounds, displaced workers, and the military. The goal of this workgroup was to remove unnecessary barriers to employment while preserving the health and safety of North Dakota citizens and promoting competition. To accomplish this, the workgroup studied North Dakota's schema for occupational licensing in order to develop a thorough understanding of licensing in our state; discover best practices; engage licensing boards and commissions; and identify the best path for reform. Finally, to fulfill the task of collecting a report from each licensing board required to comply with SB 2306, we contracted with the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR). Over the course of seven months, this effort revealed the impact of SB 2306, and uncovered unique and effective practices already being utilized by our boards, while also helping us identify opportunities for future refinement.

One opportunity identified through our work is to grant military members the same ease in obtaining a license to practice through expedited application processing or the issuance of a provisional license or temporary permit if an application cannot be processed within a 30-day timeframe, similar to what military spouses have experienced starting in 2019. The survey administered by CLEAR asked boards how many military spouses have identified themselves as such on their license application, and at the time of the survey, 58 applicants had done so and

only one was issued a temporary permit as his/her application could not be processed in the 30-day timeframe. We were encouraged to see that North Dakota's licensing boards responded quickly in getting military spouses licensed to practice. Throughout the last two years, we know that there were some military members who applied for licensure in North Dakota, and it's important that they receive the same level of expedited service.

The challenge with a one-time survey is that our results are a snapshot of a moment in time. Continuing to track the number of military members and spouses who receive licenses under the auspices of SB 2175 will help us understand the impact of our reform efforts and will improve North Dakota's military-friendly status, making it a desirable place for active and retired military families. Occupational licensing reform is an ongoing process and the annual report stated in this bill will help us understand the landscape of licensure in North Dakota and identify evolving opportunities.

Thank you for entrusting the Department of Commerce with the task of collecting this valuable information from our licensing boards. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today and am happy to answer any questions you may have.