



MANPOWER AND  
RESERVE AFFAIRS

## OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1500 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

February 16, 2023

**Chairman Wobbema  
Chair, Senate Workforce Development Committee**

**Remarks of  
Michelle Richart  
Midwest Regional Liaison  
United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office**

**Support of: SB 2187 – A Bill for an Act to create and enact chapter 43-47.1 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to adoption of the counseling compact**

### Testimony

The Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to support policy changes proposed in North Dakota SB 2187, a bill relating to the counseling profession for military spouses.

My name is Michelle Richart. I am an active duty military spouse and the Midwest Regional Liaison at the United States Department of Defense-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 Counseling Compact seeks to eliminate barriers to interstate professional counseling practice, improve patient access to professional counseling services, and enhance public protection through a shared interstate licensure data system. Of additional benefit is the compact's utilization of a mutual recognition model of interstate practice, which enhances opportunities of portable careers for military spouses by providing consistent rules which allow licensed members to work in other states through "privilege to practice policies", or more easily transfer their license to a new state.

Military families move every three years on average. The Counseling Compact helps military spouses relocate and begin work without delay by reducing the amount of time and effort needed to gain authorization to practice in a new state, even as compared to expedited licensure laws for military spouses.

I became a Regional Liaison due to of my personal experience as a military spouse and family member and my passion for quality-of-life issues confronting military families. As a military spouse of 17 years and having an occupation which requires a license, I can personally attest to the difficulties being addressed today and how not being able to work in my career field has

adversely impacted my family. Compacts like the one being addressed today allow for financial stability, facilitate placement opportunities, increase the speed in which a military family can assimilate into its new location, create a desirable new employee pool for the state, and maintain a family's well-being. Spouse employment continues to remain one of the DoD's top military family issues with approximately one-third of working military spouses requiring a state license.

Interstate compacts offer an opportunity to standardize qualifications for interstate transfer, which alleviates confusion for military spouses transferring between member states, and also allows licensing boards to simplify their process for assuring the qualifications of visiting professionals. Compacts can offer license portability for military spouses and increase the availability of critical professionals in short supply.

We appreciate the opportunity to support the policies outlined in the Licensing Compact introduced this session and are grateful to Senators Cleary, Hogan, and Roers and Representatives Porter, Ruby, and Weisz for sponsoring this important legislation. I stand ready to answer whatever questions you may have.

Very Respectfully,

**MICHELLE RICHART**  
Midwest Regional Liaison  
Defense-State Liaison Office