



MANPOWER AND
RESERVE AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

January 16, 2025

**The Honorable Senator Shannon Roers
Chair, Senate Workforce Development Committee**

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

Support of: SB 2146 – Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact

Testimony

The Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to support policy changes proposed in North Dakota SB 2146, regarding the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact, a measure to reduce barriers to social work licensing and employment in North Dakota.

My name is Michelle Richart and I am the Midwest Regional Liaison for the Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. We represent the Department and work 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 Department of Defense has advocated for improved licensure and career portability for military Service members and their spouses for several years. Military spouses are disproportionately affected by state-specific professional licensing requirements that can cause delays and gaps in employment, with thirty-six percent requiring a state license to practice in their professions and an annual cross-state relocation rate more than ten times higher than their civilian counterparts. Accordingly, military spouses experience unemployment and underemployment at significantly higher rates than their civilian peers.

State policies enacting interstate licensure compacts, such as the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact, relieve one of the many stressors of frequent military moves by enabling military spouses to transfer their licenses more quickly across state lines and obtain employment as soon as they relocate to a new state. These policies facilitate greater career sustainability for military spouses, improving their families' financial security and overall resilience.

Interstate licensure compacts benefit not only military spouses, but also apply to all eligible professionals to include active-duty Service members, members of the reserve components, veterans, and civilians. By continuing to enact these beneficial policies, North Dakota can expand the opportunity to increase its workforce available to serve the local community while

continuing in its great tradition of providing an extraordinary degree of support to our military families as they move into and out of the state.

In closing, the Department of Defense is very appreciative of North Dakota's ongoing commitment and efforts to support members of the military and their families who sacrifice much in service to our country. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to provide comments in support of this policy proposal.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michelle Richart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MICHELLE RICHART
Midwest Regional Liaison
Defense-State Liaison Office