

HB 2037/HB2161- Authorization to practice profession of spouse of active member of Armed Forces who transfers to Oregon

Testimony by Mark San Souci, 7 March 2013, for Oregon House Veterans Services & Emergency Preparedness Committee

Mister Chair and committee, thank you for the opportunity to express Department of Defense support for HB 2037/2161 to provide for military spouse portability. My name is Mark San Souci, Department of Defense Regional Liaison for Military Families for the Northwest, working for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Family & Community Policy.

On behalf of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, thank you for the opportunity to discuss professional license help for military spouses who move to Oregon as part of the military family. For 2013, this issue remains number two of the Department's ten key state issues addressing military family concerns; and has Administration support given their Joining Forces Initiative focusing on this issue.

As with many transient and mobile careers today, most decisions to stay in the military are made around the kitchen table, and not in the personnel office. To retain our trained and experienced military, we must retain the family, even in an environment with downsizing as we adjust to ever changing national security strategies.

The Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) last year reported in a survey of active duty service members that 59% of our military are married. That percentage increases to 72% for non commissioned officers and 73% for officers. As you know, NCOs and Officers possess the critical experience necessary for our professional armed forces. Over 70%-85% of their spouses say they want to work, or need to work. By the way, 95% of military spouses are women.

We know from DMDC that the annual population of military spouses that moves across state lines is 14.5 percent – compared to 1.1 % for civilian spouses.

Oregon, as of October 2012, has 933 active duty and 5,343 reserve military spouses, totaling 6,276. Most active duty spouses move every three years into and out of the state. DMDC data shows around 53% of them are employed, making it around 3,326 spouses working in Oregon. We do know that up to 34% are licensed occupations, and even if you counted only the 933 active duty spouses, approximately 317 licensed spouses a year are subject to moving (counting guard/reserves it would be 1130). Therefore passing this legislation could help up to 120 active duty military professional spouses who move every year.

Like almost all other families today, these families depend on two incomes to achieve their goals and aspirations and succeed as a family. Unlike other civilian families, military families today face challenges unique to their mobile lifestyle. We believe they should not have to sacrifice their goals and dreams as well. The proposed policy consideration in this bill will help level the playing field for our military spouses so they can meet their family's financial needs and continue their careers.

As of right now, 27 states in the last three years have modified their policies to offer the licensing help of expediting the processing of either a temporary or endorsed license, to help these spouses secure necessary employment in the new state. This session, including Oregon, 22 more states are taking up legislation to join them.

In closing, we are grateful for the tremendous support Oregon provides in support of our service members and their families, including the veterans academic and occupational credit bill last year and the others before that. Thank you to this committee for being a champion for us.

Thank you for taking up this issue in this committee for consideration this session. I stand by for any questions you may have.

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