

**Oregon Senate Committee on Human Services  
Family Advocacy Issue HB 2930**

**Testimony**

by Mark San Souci

May 8, 2017

Madame Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Olsen, and Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide information on HB 2930 that addresses an important Department of Defense quality of life issue. My name is Mark San Souci, Department of Defense (DoD) Regional State Liaison for the Northwestern states, working for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Military Community and Family Policy.

We have been working on this issue since 2015, about making efforts to determine the military status of parents whose children are subject to abuse or neglect allegations, and for authorities to notify a Department of Defense Family Advocate program and the local chain of command that relates to the military parent or guardian.

First, to reiterate what I told the house committee last month, this issue is not a reflection of any known problem with any Oregon state agency having to do with children and families and the military in this state.

What this is, however, is a recognition that the **DoD has found problems in states because of the present system that often relies on individual, local MOUs to deal with it.** or none at all. And because of that, this issue has risen to make our annual list of pressing concerns to work with legislators at the state level to try and address.

The Secretary of Defense is required by Section 1787 of Title 10 US Code to coordinate with civilian child welfare to obtain information on allegations of child abuse and neglect involving children in military families.

If this bill becomes a law, it will help us address those issues by providing **a consistent and uniform state statute into law that will allow the military installation to know this unfortunate situation has occurred.** It lets the chain of command know, and allows a family to

seek the medical and counseling services the military installation provides. **And prevent anyone from slipping through the cracks, so to speak.**

70% of military families live off a military installation and in our communities. And considering the lack of military installations in Oregon, that percentage is no doubt higher.

The military services offer excellent investigative, intervention, and rehabilitative support resources that can assist the state child welfare system in addressing allegations.

While the current DoD policy described in the Family Advocacy Program is to establish MOUs to operationalize communication and cooperation, we are asking for **specific state level guidance that directs information sharing with the military will provide consistency and complements the language that directs action by the SecDef.**

Because we have been working on this issue only since 2015 for the Personnel and Readiness Directorate of Department of Defense, we now have 12 states (AR, DE, ID, IL, IN, MT, NJ, OK, SC, VA, WA, WY), doing what HB 2930 asks you to consider, with another 6 states (AL, CO, CT, GA, NC, TX) plus OR taking it up in 2017, spreading their best practice language to other states.

We know Oregon is not a huge **active duty** military state, but as of September 2016, according to the Defense Management Data Center (DMDC), has a total active military of 933 military members, 381 spouses, and 1,563 children 5-18. I am still trying to get the number to include 0-5 because of course lots of abuse victims are in that age group too.

The latest DMDC data I can find for Select Reserves indicates 10, 455 military members, 5,343 spouses, and 5,112 total dependents. Unfortunately, with this many people in both components, occasionally child abuse happens.

An August 2016 DoD Family Advocacy Program report of fiscal year 2015 data (the latest), indicated that the DoD rate of individual child victims remains approximately half of the rate of the US civilian population. That known, DoD **remains focused on military-specific risk factors and associated prevention strategies that best serves the military family.**

**In FY15, while incidents decreased 1.4% from FY14, an upward trend from FY09 to FY 14 prompted an enhanced focus on the prevention of child neglect in 2015. Neglect actually continues to comprise the majority at 58% of incidents reported.**

**I think you would agree with me that regardless of the numbers, every child's life is worth this effort.**

Thank you for taking up this issue, and please move HB 2930 forward to implement improvements to your current law to help save every child.

I stand for any questions.

*Mark*

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Point of contact for to report allegations of child abuse in a military family in Oregon will be:

Joint Forces HQ Resources  
3225 State St., PO Box 14350  
Attn: State Director for Oregon  
Salem, OR 97309-5047  
Email Oregon State Director  
Phone 503-584-2245

Family Advocacy Program Managers by Installation (Active) is:

US Army

USAREC, Portland Battalion  
US Army Recruiting Battalion HQ  
1220 SW 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave  
Portland, OR 97204  
Phone 503-256-1431, 503-256-2572  
<http://www.usarec.army.mil/6thbde/6hbn/>