

February 14, 2019

To: Chair Taylor and Members of the Senate Committee on Workforce

### **Testimony in support of SB 722**

My husband has been serving his country faithfully for the past 19 years – 6 of those were at Fort Bragg, NC, while serving in the U.S. Army. We have lived in many beautiful vacation destinations up and down the East Coast and this is our first move out west – this PCS didn't disappoint.

While serving in the Army, my husband was always deployed. I think I saw him for 3 months spread over the 6 years that he served. He decided to get out of the Army about a year after we had our son. This lateral move didn't come without hardships, he went from an E6 in the Army to an E3 in the US Coast Guard, starting over at the age of 27, because his dream was always to be a dad and watch his son grow up. The duty stations that he was assigned to were stations, ants, or sectors allowing him the ability to be home. This PCS was supposed to be our twilight tour, but instead we find ourselves coming full circle. Not only deploying again after 12 years, but also deploying back down close to where he started his military career in the Army.

My husband's cutter, USCGC Steadfast, deployed during the shutdown and this by far has to be the worst deployment I have ever experienced. It's not because I am weak, I am far from it. But the emotions...the tears, the hugs, the feels, the support of our local community, and family and friends across the world. I have felt it all during the shutdown in hearing stories of my fellow Coastie families struggling to make ends meet, but also seeing the massive amount of support from our amazing community for our Be The Light Food Pantry. But what hurts the most is that the mission continues no matter what - even without pay. The rocks of our families are taken away during uncertain times for months on end. Leaving families to figure out how to make ends meet.

When we missed our paycheck on January 15<sup>th</sup>, and almost missed our pay on January 31<sup>st</sup>, the morale of our Coast Guard families was at an all-time low. What were these families supposed to do while their spouses are deployed, and no money is coming in to care for their families at home? Then the government re-opened temporarily with a continuing resolution. We received our backpay and our regularly scheduled paycheck and gave us a little sense of peace. However, Coast Guard families remained in shutdown mode saving all that they could until a fully funded budget has passed.

It's my job to remain hopeful, to remain strong and steadfast, and to shine for my husband and our son. I am constantly reminding myself to Be The Light and shine as bright as I can for not only my family, but also my community.

Please support SB 722.

Thank You & God Bless,

Stacey A Benson  
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