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OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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

January 9, 2024

Maine State Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Sen. Donna Bailey, Senate Chair
Rep. Anne Perry, House Chair

Remarks of
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LD 2043, An Act to Add the State of Maine to the Compact for Licensing Physician Assistants

The Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to support the policies proposed in Legislative Document 2043, An Act to Add the State of Maine to the Compact for Licensing Physician Assistants, which addresses licensing issues affecting our service members and their families. The purpose of the compact is to facilitate interstate practice of professional health care services with the goal of reducing regulatory barriers and increasing access to care.

My name is Melissa Willette, and I am the New England Region Liaison for the United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. Each liaison represents the Department and works with state officials, policy makers, and stakeholders regarding issues that affect military service members, veterans and their families.

To address license portability for military spouses, states have turned to occupational licensure interstate compacts, which streamline relicensing between member States of a compact for all practitioners in an occupation and provide specific support for military spouses of relocating active-duty personnel through provisions recognizing unique requirements of military life. This is significant for the military community in that along with active-duty military spouses receiving the benefit of compacts, active-duty members, members of the reserve component, reserve component spouses, transitioning service members and other veterans benefit from the mobility provided through the compact.

Taking care of our people remains the top priority of the Department of Defense, and is at the center of our National Defense Strategy.¹ Military spouses provide the strong foundation upon which their loved ones in uniform stand, and both our communities and Nation rely on their resilience, and to further expand employment opportunities for military spouses, the Department has been directed to

¹ Terri Moon Cronk, Austin Outlines His Top Three Priorities on Defense, People, Teamwork, United States Department of Defense, March 5, 2021, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2526532/austin-outlines-his-top-three-priorities-on-defense-people-teamwork/>

accelerate the passage of interstate licensure compacts to ease a burden for spouses who must go through the often challenging and frustrating process of transferring their professional licenses with each move.²

There are many unique requirements that come with a life of service in the United States Armed Forces, and those requirements are not only bestowed on the service member, but also on the spouses and children of those who serve.³

For military spouses in particular, professional licensing requirements remain an enduring challenge. Due to the nature of the military, most active-duty service members change duty stations every few years. Not only is the service member expected to reacquaint themselves with a new installation, unit, and command, the spouse too is forced to reinvent themselves professionally. The Physician Associates Compact will allow health care professionals to transcend these boundaries.⁴

Frequent moves and cumbersome licensing and certification requirements limit career options for military spouses. Removing these barriers, creating reciprocity in licensing requirements, and facilitating placement opportunities can help a military family's financial stability, speed the assimilation of the family into its new location, and create a desirable new employee pool for a state.

With the above stated benefits in mind, we look forward to engaging in efforts that will create increased quality of life for all populations we aim to serve. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the policies included in LD 2043, and thank the bill sponsor, Representative Cloutier, for introducing this legislation.

Again, thank you for your attention and consideration of these policies. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this provided testimony.

Respectfully,

MELISSA WILLETTE
New England Region Liaison
Defense-State Liaison Office

² Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Taking Care of Our Service Members and Their Families (Memorandum for Senior Leadership), United States Department of Defense, September 22, 2022, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Sep/22/2003083398/-1/-1/0/TAKING-CARE-OF-OUR-SERVICE-MEMBERS-AND-FAMILIES.PDF>

³ The annual percent of the military spouse population that moves across state lines is 14.5% compared to their civilian counterparts at 1.1%. As much as 34% of military spouses in the labor force are required to be fully licensed; and of those spouses, 19% experience license maintenance difficulties.

⁴ National Center for Interstate Compacts. "What will these interstate compacts achieve?" <https://compacts.csg.org/our-work/ics/>