



# THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

## **Next Step of Occupational Licensing Reform: Helping Our Military Families Get Back to Work**

Interested Party Testimony  
Ohio House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee  
Senate Bill 7

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Chairman Perales, Vice Chair Hood, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding Senate Bill 7.

My name is Greg R. Lawson and I am a research fellow at The Buckeye Institute, an independent research and educational institution—a think tank—whose mission is to advance free-market public policy in the states.

As The Buckeye Institute explained in *Increasing Job Opportunities for Military Families*, military spouses and families face disproportionate difficulties securing gainful employment in the private sector due, in part, to the sacrifices they make on our behalf moving around the country.

On average, military families move once every three years, a relocation rate that directly and adversely affects their job prospects and opportunities. In 2012, the *Institute for Veterans and Military Families* estimated that the unemployment rate among female military spouses ages 18-24 had increased dramatically from 15 percent to 30 percent over a 12-year period. By contrast, the civilian unemployment rate had fluctuated between eight and 12 percent during the same period.

The higher relocation and unemployment rates among military families make them especially susceptible to the negative effects of occupational licensing laws that often function as permission slip policies that require would-be workers to seek permission from the government before earning a living. According to The Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 73 percent of military spouses with an occupational license require a renewal or reissuance of their license after being transferred to a new state.

Unfortunately, Ohio's occupational licensing regime is contributing to problem. Many of Ohio's onerous occupational licensing restrictions do not recognize licenses earned and issued across state lines. In many cases, Ohio requires additional schooling or costly new licenses for professionals already licensed or certified elsewhere—restrictions that prove especially burdensome on military families. Such policies affect Ohioans across all walks of life, but they are particularly harmful to the families of active duty military personnel.

Currently, Ohio requires military spouses licensed in other states to secure a temporary license in Ohio while they wait for an Ohio licensing board to approve their out-of-state credentials. An already-licensed out-of-state dietitian, for example, moving to Ohio must satisfy a dizzying list of **bureaucratic requirements** just to receive a six-month temporary permit to practice. Such temporary accommodation alleviates *some* burden for military families, but it remains more restrictive than necessary.

Consider, for example, the McKinnon family. **Brianna McKinnon** is a school teacher who does not consider teaching to be a job, but simply part of “who she is.” Brianna is a licensed teacher from Washington state who teaches at-risk youth in a Dayton school that has a hard time finding teachers willing to take on such a difficult teaching environment. And Ohio's licensing policy has only made it harder.

Brianna's husband, an Air Force lieutenant, recently transferred to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. The McKinnons had assumed that Brianna would work with Ohio's at-risk youth much as she had in Washington. Unfortunately, the McKinnons learned that Ohio makes it very difficult for military spouses to obtain the state's permission to teach in our public schools. Brianna discovered that before she could teach here Ohio would first require her to take numerous college courses, sit for several exams, and pay for a background check and the teaching certificate. Those unnecessary requirements were simply too much for a family with two young children trying to make ends meet on a military salary.

For now, Brianna teaches in the Dayton area on a one year temporary license, but at the end of this year she may no longer be allowed to teach in Ohio. Discouraged by Ohio's needless bureaucracy, Lieutenant McKinnon has considered leaving the Air Force next year so that Brianna can pursue her teaching career elsewhere.

The McKinnons' dilemma is unfortunately all too common in Ohio. Ohio's occupational licensing laws perpetuate permission slip policies that make life more difficult for military and non-military families to pursue their dreams and earn their livings.

Building on The Buckeye Institute's **2016 proposal**, Ohio policymakers have introduced legislation to increase job opportunities for military families. Senate Bill 7 and House Bill 133 would move Ohio closer to the Defense Department's recommendation that states modify out-of-state licensing regimes to allow state boards to recognize active credentials from sister states.

Senate Bill 7, for example, would allow those holding occupational licenses from states with educational or credentialing requirements significantly lower than Ohio's to continue to work in Ohio within their scope of practice—a positive sign that military spouses stationed here do not need special permission slips from the state to earn a living.

By removing barriers to employment, Senate Bill 7 would also help Ohio's minority communities that still face daunting employment prospects and higher **national unemployment rates**. Ohio should not continue to make minority communities overcome state-imposed obstacles that effectively turn away prospective employers and employment opportunities.

Although Senate Bill 7 would improve Ohio's current policy, its provisions still fall short of many **other states** that offer full reciprocity rather than merely temporary licenses. Even if Senate Bill 7 becomes law, Ohio's licensing regime still would be more restrictive than Arizona, Texas, and Florida, for example. Earlier this year, Arizona became the **first state** in the nation to offer full reciprocity to those with valid licenses from other states.

Occupational licensing requirements only make the road to employment and economic recovery more treacherous. Every license requirement raises a red-taped hurdle for workers to clear before earning a living or starting a new career. Every hour of unpaid training needed to satisfy bureaucratic requirements is an hour not spent earning tips, impressing a boss, serving a

customer, or opening a business. Those are hours of productivity, hours of opportunity that young, low-income workers sorely need, but that the state continues to deny them.

Senate Bill 7 will help to relieve the burdens imposed by Ohio's permission slip policies and will help families like the McKinnons to continue serving the country while pursuing their dreams and working to better our communities.

Thank you for your time and attention. I welcome any questions that the Committee might have.



### ***About The Buckeye Institute***

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