



Proponent Testimony on H.B. 133 (Occupational Licenses for Military Spouses)
Rachel Castle
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Before the House State and Local Government Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
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Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Ginter, Ranking Minority Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 133, which requires state occupational licensing agencies to issue temporary licenses to active duty members of the Armed Services and their spouses who have moved to Ohio.

I would also like to thank Representatives Rick Perales and Jim Butler for their leadership on this bill, which is important to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, our state, and our national defense.

My name is Rachel Castle. I am Director of Defense Programs of the Dayton Development Coalition, an economic development organization that seeks to attract, retain, and grow jobs in the 14-county Dayton region. Our responsibility includes attracting and retaining new missions and jobs at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and Springfield Air National Guard Base.

With nearly 30,000 workers, Wright-Patterson is the largest single-site employer in Ohio. Attracting and retaining jobs at the Base is critical not only to the Dayton region, but to the entire state.

I want to point out that this measure is not only important to Wright-Patterson and the Dayton region. Ohio is home to National Guard and Reserve bases near Cincinnati, Toledo, Mansfield, Springfield, Youngstown, Toledo, Zanesville, and other locations. Defense installations near Columbus and Cleveland employ thousands of workers.

Quality of life issues for military families are expected increasingly to drive decisions by the military when selecting which defense installations will receive new jobs. The military services are challenged to meet enlistment and reenlistment goals, so they want to be attractive to families. To make that strategy work, the military needs environments for its bases that are friendly to spouses and families.

The military has made it very clear that it will use its leverage as a local economic driver to improve the family-friendly laws and regulations that affect its service members. In other words, in order for Ohio to remain competitive with other states to gain new military jobs, we need to enact legislation that supports military spouses and families.

This summer, Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson met with business leaders in Dayton and she clearly delivered this message.

One of the Air Force family quality of life priorities is making it easier for spouses of active duty military members who have an occupational license in one state to obtain a similar license when they are reassigned to another state—an issue known as reciprocal licensing.

Last year, Secretary Wilson, along with the other service secretaries, jointly announced that occupational licensing reciprocity and quality of local schools would be considered in selecting bases for additional missions.

A November 2017 report commissioned by the Department of Defense looked at how all 50 states were meeting military needs for licensing reciprocity. According to the report, Ohio did not meet all best practices. We need to do better.

In the next few years, the Air Force and Department of Defense will make decisions on where to base new missions and locate jobs. Ohio military installations, including Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Reserve, and National Guard Bases will be in the running for some of these new missions, which could involve significant numbers of jobs.

Failure to pass legislation to establish adequate occupational licensing reciprocity for military spouses sends a message that our state is unwilling to do its part to meet the needs of America's servicemen and women. It tells the Department of Defense that we don't want their jobs. We cannot let this happen.

House Bill 133 makes good economic sense for Ohio. It also makes good sense for our national security by strengthening our military and supporting the men and women in our Armed Services. I urge the Committee to approve the bill.

Again, thank you Mr. Chair.