



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 133 Before the Ohio House State & Local Government Committee

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Thank you, Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Ginter, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify regarding House Bill 133.

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 outlined in its brief, *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.

For example, take a look at **Brianna McKinnon**.

Brianna doesn't look at being a teacher as just a job she holds, but says "it is who she is." And she has chosen one of the most difficult teaching paths available—working with at risk youth in a school where it is hard to find substitute teachers let alone full-time teachers.

While being a teacher is who Brianna is, it is not the only role she fills. She is also a military spouse, which means she and her family have no say over where they will live—that decision is up to the U.S. Department of Defense. After earning her teaching certificate in Washington state, Brianna's husband was transferred to Ohio, to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

Unfortunately, when Brianna and her husband got settled in Ohio, she learned that the state makes it very difficult for military spouses to get an Ohio job license so they can quickly begin working in their chosen professions. To get an Ohio teaching certificate Brianna would have to take numerous college courses, take a number of exams and she would have had to pay for a background check and the license itself. As a mom with two young kids and on a military salary this was all too much—not to mention unnecessary.

Brianna was discouraged and frustrated with Ohio's needlessly bureaucratic system. She and her husband had long ago decided that Brianna's teaching career would be a key factor in their family's plans—if she couldn't teach, the family would make changes so she could. For now, Brianna is teaching in the Dayton area on a one year temporary license, but at the end of this year, she can no longer teach in the state of Ohio unless she goes to a private school, which is not where her calling lies.

This is but one story that illustrates how Ohio's occupational licensing laws effectively create permission slip policies that make life more difficult for good people to earn a living.

On average, military families move once every three years, a relocation rate that directly and adversely affects their job prospects and opportunities. The **Institute for Veterans and Military Families** estimates that the unemployment rate among female military spouses ages 18-24 has increased dramatically from 15 percent to 30 percent over a 12-year period. By contrast, the civilian unemployment rate has 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 Ohioans to seek permission from the government before earning a living. Such policies impact many Ohioans across all walks of life, but they are particularly harmful to the families of active duty military personnel.

The Institute for Veterans and Military Families revealed, for example, that 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, 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.

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. The Defense Department has recommended modifying out-of-state licensing regimes through licensing by “endorsement,” allowing state boards to recognize active credentials from sister states.

Building on The Buckeye Institute's 2016 proposal, Ohio policymakers have introduced legislation to increase job opportunities for military families. Provisions in House Bill 133 would move Ohio closer to the Defense Department's recommendation. Under House Bill 133, in cases in which the licensing state has educational or credentialing requirements significantly lower than Ohio's, individuals would still be permitted 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.

House Bill 133 would also help Ohio's minority communities that tragically face daunting employment prospects and a national **unemployment rate** among African Americans that remains much higher than among other demographics. Ohio's minority communities should not be made to overcome state-imposed obstacles that effectively turn away prospective employers and employment opportunities.

Although the proposed provisions would improve Ohio's current policy, they still far short of many **other states** that offer full reciprocity rather than merely temporary licenses. Thus, even if House Bill 133 becomes state law, Ohio would still be more occupationally restrictive than states such as Arizona, Texas, and Florida.

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.

Provisions in House Bill 133 will help to relieve the burdens imposed by Ohio's permission slip policies and will help people like Brianna McKinnon and her family.

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

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About The Buckeye Institute

Founded in 1989, The Buckeye Institute is an independent research and educational institution – a think tank – whose mission is to advance free-market public policy in the states.

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