



## State Representative Casey Weinstein House Bill 133 – Licensing Reciprocity

Chair McColley, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding House Bill 133. My joint sponsor, Representative Rick Perales, has already informed you as to how widespread the problems military families face with licensing reciprocity, with hundreds upon hundreds of families impacted throughout Ohio. While I am not the only veteran to have served with my spouse, my experience is unique to this body.

When my wife, Amanda, and I were stationed together at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, we were far from well off, but we were comfortable. As members of our military should be. Regrettably, I cannot say the same was true of my fellow service members with civilian spouses. Time and time again, I saw newly stationed service members struggle as their family finances were impacted by spousal unemployment. And of course, this problem is not one isolated to Wright-Patterson. In 2017, the Department of Defense found that a full 25% of military spouses are unemployed. That's a rate **seven** times higher than the national average.

When my fellow service members' spouses were able to find work, they were often over-qualified and underemployed. Military spouses are truly dedicated individuals. In addition to all the extra-hardships they go through in married life, with many moves that can cause isolation and depression, they also have a higher rate of education attainment the nation as a whole. Despite this, military spouses who are employed earn a full 25% less than their counterparts with equal levels of educational attainment and professional qualification. By not supporting licensing

reciprocity, we are penalizing nurses, teachers, and other in-demand professionals for their families' commitment to serving the United States of America. And we in Ohio are not paying the price here alone. We as a nation are bearing the cost.

The cost is more than that of missed opportunities for Ohioans, it also hampers the United States military readiness. Because military spouses suffer as they do, married service members' retention rates have fallen well below those service members who are unmarried. Too much of our top talent is being lost because the economic stress military families face. We in Ohio have an opportunity to lead the nation with this legislation, becoming one of the first states to pass ambitious licensing reciprocity legislation. In doing so we will help alleviate the economic stress being placed on military families, bring in-demand professionals to Ohio, keep top talent in the military for longer, and maintain national military readiness.

We talk a lot about our promise to veterans, but we have a promise to active duty service members and their families as well. Passing this legislation will put us one more step toward meeting that obligation and letting our service men and women know that when we talk about how family comes, we include military families stationed in Ohio as well.

There is no time like the present to act on this pressing matter.

Chair McColley, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any of your questions.