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## I N S T I T U T E

May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Senator Terry Johnson  
Chair, Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
The Ohio Senate

re: SB 131 will welcome workers by recognizing out-of-state occupational licenses

Dear Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, and Members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony. My name is Heather Curry and I am with the Goldwater Institute, a public policy research and litigation organization based in Phoenix, Arizona.

In 2019, Arizona became the first state to universally recognize out-of-state occupational licenses. Our state's reform was broad, easing the pathway to licensure for numerous occupations, including engineering, cosmetology, dentistry, the trades, and across the healthcare field. Similar to Ohio Senate Bill 131, Arizona's recognition pathway is available to professionals who have held an out-of-state occupational license at a similar practice level for at least one year. Applicants must be in good standing with their out-of-state licensing board and may not have a disqualifying criminal history nor be the subject of an ongoing investigation.

**Arizona's reform may be new but it is already proving to be a tremendous success.** In the 18 months since universal recognition went into effect in our state, over **3,250** workers have received a license to work under the new law. Among these:

- More than **925** licenses were approved by our Registrar of Contractors, empowering skilled tradesmen and tradeswomen to get to work quickly when they move into the state;
- Nearly **200** physicians and over **40** physician assistants were issued Arizona licenses based on their out-of-state qualifications;
- Over **400** behavioral health specialists received licenses to work under recognition.

This reform recognizes that while state-to-state licensing requirements may vary, a professional who has already been working safely and productively in one state should not face additional training or testing hurdles when crossing state lines simply to continue to do the same job. Under universal recognition, Arizona's boards remain free to determine the scope of practice of a given license and to determine if an applicant's out-of-state license reflects that same scope. Senate Bill 131 proposes a similar approach, ensuring that boards are able to carry out their most essential duties while more efficiently welcoming workers into the state.

Arizona's 3,250 licensing stories represent more than the successful implementation of an innovative policy idea. They represent the individuals and families who benefit when policymakers welcome workers with open arms instead of red tape. As in Arizona's reform, each

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piece of SB 131 works alongside the others to ensure that applicants have a clear path to licensure and are not required to put their lives or careers on hold to repeat training or testing they have already completed out-of-state.

In 2019, Ohio's Senate Bill 7 helped set a national standard for excellence in licensing reform for military families. With Senate Bill 131, the legislature has the opportunity to extend the benefits of that essential reform to even more hardworking Americans, providing support at a time when many families are already facing unprecedented challenges brought on by the pandemic.

Senate Bill 131 not only expands the benefits of licensing recognition to skilled professionals but creates additional pathways to licensure through work experience and private certification. This approach ensures that hardworking Americans aren't locked out of work in Ohio simply because some states may approach regulation differently.

With this reform, Ohio would join a growing movement of states enacting similar legislation, including Arizona, Iowa, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, Utah, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Wyoming. As America's workforce becomes increasingly mobile, professionals have more choices than ever about where they can live while pursuing their careers. By recognizing out-of-state occupational licenses, Ohio will send a strong message that it respects and values the training and experience of licensed professionals across the country, and signal that workers will find support and opportunity in the state.

With Senate Bill 131, Ohio's legislature can break down barriers to work and welcome skilled professionals into the state. This commonsense, pro-growth economic policy will make Ohio an even more attractive place to live and work.

Thank you,  
Heather

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