

Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee
Testimony in Support of Amended Substitute Senate Bill 7
By Lt Colonel John Bocchieri

Chairman Perales, Vice Chairman Hood and Ranking Member Weinstein, thank you for moving forward legislation to help members of the Armed Services and their families. Amended Substitute SB7 is an important step towards supporting the families of military members who must relocate because of a spouse's military assignment.

I am a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force Reserve and a pilot on the C-130 aircraft at the Youngstown Air Reserve Station. I've served for 25 years as a military officer both on Active Duty, the Ohio Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve, accepting assignments in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Ohio. Embedded in that 25 years of service, especially on Active Duty, were several moves based upon the needs of the military.

I served as the unit's Airlift Squadron Commander for five years and supervised over 150 fulltime and part time Reservists. I've seen personally the struggles families experience with relocations for assignments or training. Many military families make decisions about assignments based upon the convenience of the move and the impact on their children. Often spouses cannot perform the jobs they were trained to do because Ohio doesn't recognize professional licensure reciprocity with other states.

Imagine this scenario of an Air Force Reservist stationed at Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Marietta Georgia. Based upon the needs of the military, or to accept a promotion you must relocate to an assignment at the Youngstown Air Reserve Station. You have roughly four months to make this move. In Georgia, your wife is a realtor and your three children are in high school and elementary school. You don't want to move your kids in the middle of the school year so the military service member makes the decision to accept the assignment and move the family after the school year. A financial hardship begins because now the member must make a partial move, rent an apartment in Youngstown and place their home in Marietta up for sale. Often when the school year ends, the family will move to Ohio even if their home didn't sell in Georgia. Both spouses need to work and the financial stress begins upon their arrival in Ohio because the spouse cannot practice their professional trade until they obtain an Ohio professional license.

This movement not only creates a difficulty for the member to settle their family while continuing to participate in their military duties, it can create a real hardship for professional family members whose licensure doesn't transfer between states.

The above scenario describes the decisions made Air Reserve Technicians (ART). An ART is a fulltime civilian employee of the Department of Defense (DoD), who themselves are Air Force Reservists and required to train Traditional Reservists (TR's) who hold public or private jobs outside of the DoD. This legislation's scope is to cover all members of the Armed Forces, and does not discriminate between Active Duty personnel and Reservists or Guard Members. It allows for reciprocity of professional licensure not only for the member of the Armed Forces but their spouses as well.

Consider this data from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

- 66 percent of military spouses participate in the labor force - most under 30 years of age¹
- 25 percent of military spouses have a bachelor's degree - 10 percent have advanced degrees²
- 35 percent of military spouses are employed in fields that require licensure primarily in Health and Education according to a Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families Study³
- Nearly 37 percent of military spouses consider themselves under-employed according to a 2017 survey by Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America⁴
- Blue Star Families Research estimate the societal costs of unemployment or under-employment of military spouses cost families between \$700 Million and \$1 Billion in lost revenue⁵

If your spouse is a lawyer, insurance agent, teacher or nurse, they must participate in a whole new round of 're-licensing' in Ohio that causes personal hardships and financial stress for families already experiencing the strain of an assignment relocation.

Ohio has a large military footprint and it is important that lawmakers advocate for state policies that make the transition from assignments in other states as seamless as possible. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce predicts 34 percent of military spouses move four or more times and half moved at least three times.

- Ohio recognizes a \$11.3 Billion defense economy⁶
- Ohio boasts 6,800 active duty personnel and 27,208 Reservists⁷
- The Ohio Guard employs 16,500 members across 50 installations in 37 counties
- The Ohio Air National Guard is the 2nd largest and the Army Guard is the 5th largest in the U.S.
- Wright Patterson Air Force Base has nearly 60,000 military, civilian and defense contractor jobs

This policy allows for a fluid transition of military families between states. By allowing licensure reciprocity in the State of Ohio we are furthering our appeal for potential new missions and bases.

By supporting policies like licensure reciprocity, we salute their willingness to serve and the sacrifices these men and women make for our nation.

Lt Col John Boccieri is Direct of the Commander's Action Group at the Youngstown Air Reserve Station. He is a former State Representative, State Senator and Member of Congress.

¹ Winters, Amanda, Rachael Stephens and Jennifer Schultz. "Barriers to Work: Veterans and Military Spouses." *National Conference of State Legislatures*, July 17, 2018. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/barriers-to-work-veterans-and-military-spouses.aspx>

² IBID

³ Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families. "*Military Spouse Employment Report*," February 12, 2014. <https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/article/military-spouse-employment-survey/>

⁴ Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "*2019 Member Survey*," February 2019. <https://iava.org/survey2019/IAVA-2019-Member-Survey.pdf>

⁵ Blue Star Families. "*Job Searching Milspouses Say: Enough with the Career Resource*," April 12, 2019. <https://bluestarfam.org/2019/04/job-searching-milspouses-say-enough-with-the-career-resources/>

⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, Office of Economic Adjustment. "Defense Spending by State," Fiscal Year 2017.

⁷ IBID