



**State Representative Andrea White
District 41**

**State Representative Phil Plummer
District 40**

HB 252 – Sponsor Testimony
Senate Health Committee
May 19, 2021

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 252 with my joint sponsor, Representative Phil Plummer. This important legislation will enable Ohio to join the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact (ALSP-IC), expanding access to care for Ohioans and opportunities for audiologists and speech-language pathologists.

The compact allows eligible professionals to work across state lines – either in person or through telehealth – without having to get licensed in other compact member states. This not only creates more employment opportunities for our state’s audiologists and speech-language pathologists, but also makes it easier for qualified professionals coming into our state to work – including military family members relocating here. This is good news for Ohioans of all ages who face limited access to these important health care services in underserved and geographically isolated parts of our state. Ohio is actually facing a critical shortage of speech and hearing professionals – particularly in our schools, nursing homes and rural communities. These are time-sensitive services that can change the trajectory of individuals’ lives.

Our state’s speech and hearing professionals make a a life-changing difference every day for children like Tommy, a non-verbal three-year old preschooler on the Autism Spectrum. Tommy spent his days crying, walking in circles and hitting. After receiving intensive speech therapy from a skilled speech pathologist, Tommy learned to verbally communicate with others. He is now fully included in his first grade class, able to communicate, make friendships and independently go through his school day including getting on the bus by himself at the end of the day. Imagine if a speech and hearing professional had not been there for him.

Then there’s Martha. Martha’s quite a bit older, in fact she’s a nursing home patient recovering from COVID and considered a long-hauler who needs help in reversing the “brain fog” and cognition effects caused by this devastating virus. Will there be a professional to assist her? A lot depends on where she lives in our state and her region’s access to speech and hearing professionals.

House Bill 252 will help increase the chances of successful recovery, communication and human connection for Ohio’s residents by enabling us to become members of the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact. Through the compact, audiologists and speech-language pathologists licensed in their home state apply for a privilege to practice under the compact.

Professionals who qualify can provide services in any compact member state, including Ohio, helping serve unmet needs and even providing continuity of care when student or adult clients relocate or travel.

To exercise the compact privilege under the terms and provisions of the Compact, the audiologist or speech-language pathologist must:

- Hold an active license in the home state;
- Have no encumbrance on any state license;
- Be eligible for a compact privilege in any member state as described in the compact;
- Have not had any adverse action against any license or compact privilege within the previous 2 years from date of application;
- Notify the Commission that the licensee is seeking the compact privilege within a remote state(s);
- Pay any applicable fees, including any state fee, for the compact privilege;
- Report to the Commission adverse action taken by any non-member state within 30 days from the date the adverse action is taken

The compact states communicate and exchange information including verification of licensure and disciplinary services. With that, states will be able to retain the ability to regulate practice in their states. This helps ensure a higher degree of consumer protection across state lines, certifies professionals have met acceptable standards of practice and promotes cooperation between compact member states in the areas of licensure and regulation. Interstate compacts are an excellent tool to expand opportunities for health care professionals without having to get licensed in multiple states, while safeguarding the public's health and safety.

Recently, the tenth state enacted this compact into law, reaching the threshold for activation and establishing the ASLP Compact Commission. The commission is set to convene by early fall to establish rules and bylaws and implement the shared interstate licensure data system to allow for instant verification of good standing. By swiftly enacting this legislation before we recess for summer, Ohio will have a seat at the table in the setup process as the formal structure of the compact is put in place.

If Ohio joins this interstate compact, our citizens will enjoy better access to client, patient, and student care services and our audiology and our speech-language pathology professionals will experience positive employment growth. For those transitioning to our state for residency, particularly our military members who may only be here for a short duty station, it enables occupational reciprocity and helps reduce spousal unemployment and hardships as they settle in Ohio.

It is critically important that Ohio continues to grow its reputation as a welcoming state for our military families. First and foremost – we want to impact lives through family-friendly policies and programs that reduce stress and help them flourish in the midst of difficult transitions. We also need to help ensure that our state continues to remain a strategic partner and host for our nation's military installations. Representative Plummer will share more about this now.

Representative Plummer.....

Representative Plummer

As Representative White indicates, by joining this interstate compact, our citizens will enjoy better access to client, patient, and student care services and our audiology and our speech-language pathology professionals will experience positive employment growth. For those transitioning to our state for residency, particularly our military members who may only be here for a short duty station, it enables occupational reciprocity and helps reduce spousal unemployment and hardships as they settle in Ohio.

When we consider the overall wellbeing of our military families, it is important to understand the amount of stress and undue burdens that are accompanied by having to continually move. These families are finding it to be extremely difficult to work in careers that have the licensing capabilities as they transfer from one state to the next. Often, military families will move an average of six to eight times during their children's growing up years.

Understandably, the well-being of military spouses can significantly impact our service members. More than one out of three military spouses in Ohio are engaged in jobs that require occupational licensing. Through H.B. 252, we can allow our military families moving from other compact states to continue their current occupation without the fear of delays, any other unexpected barriers or potential long-term career implications.

Our region is host to one of our state's key military installations where many of these families are stationed - Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, the state's largest single-site employer with over 32,000 jobs. Headquarters to some of the Air Force's largest missions, Wright-Patt serves as a key center of innovation, technology incubation, and economic growth driving advances not only in defense but in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, aviation, and more. More than 40 percent of the Air Force's budget flows through Wright-Patt.

Added together with the base, Southwest Ohio's federal installations contribute more than \$16.5 billion in combined regional economic impact each year and employ more than 88,000 people. This includes active duty, guard and reserve military members, federal civilians and government contractors. These Federal installations and strategic partners are economic anchors of their regions and they continue to lead the nation when it comes to supporting our military.

To put this into perspective, there are over 90 different military installations across Ohio. Some of these Military Installations include: The Ohio National Guard—Located in Toledo, Ohio, it is currently the nation's second largest Air Guard; The Air Reserves--- Located in Youngstown, Ohio, it is the only unit within the Department of Defense to perform Aerial Spray; and The NASA Glenn Research Center--- Located in Cleveland, Ohio, a center that plays a vital role in the exploration of the moon and space.

In addition to these military installations, Ohio is home to both the largest jet engine producer in the world, GE Aviation, and the last heavy armor plant in the U.S., located in Lima. Even more, over 3,200 suppliers partner with organizations like Agility Prime, a new Air Force launched program to accelerate the commercial market for "flying cars," as well as top universities to conduct research for the military and NASA. These strategic partnerships and military installations help drive technological innovation and

create a ripple effect of impact that's changing not only our region and state, but our nation and beyond.

State-side Federal installations are critical to our nation's defense and Ohio plays a major role as the facilitator to many strategic projects. By continuing to make Ohio more military-friendly, we will help retain these installations and position our state to attract even more, which in turn will allow our service members to advance their careers while enjoying the welcoming climate that Ohio has to offer.

As we continue to recognize the impact that service members have on the great State of Ohio, we must continue to find new ways to support them by removing unneeded barriers and obstacles for their families as they seek to transition to our state. By doing so, we will not only improve their quality of life, but also help solidify our reputation as one of the best places to call home even after retirement.

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony with Representative White. We are happy to answer any questions committee members may have at this time.