



Good morning, Senator Bartolotta and fellow committee members.

My name is Matt Shafer. I am a Senior Policy Analyst at The Council of State Governments. The Council of State Governments is a nonpartisan membership organization that represents state governments. We work primarily with legislators, legislative staff, governor's staff and executive cabinets to promote excellence in state government through policy research and by convening our members to share ideas.

I am here today as a representative of the Occupational Licensing Policy Learning Consortium. Over the past 3 years, CSG, in partnership with the National Governors Association and National Conference of State Legislatures, has provided technical assistance to a group of 16 states that are all focused on occupational licensing reform. Through a competitive application process, these states were selected to join the consortium and have become familiar with occupational licensing policy in their own state, learned about occupational licensing best practices in other states, and have started implementing actions to remove barriers to labor market entry and improve portability and reciprocity.

Each state has a project team in order to include representation from relevant stakeholders involved in occupational licensing, including: state legislators, the governor's office, state workforce agencies, state regulatory or licensing boards, and state administrative agencies involved in occupational licensing. As a part of joining the consortium, states were asked to focus on four target populations that are disproportionately affected by occupational licensing. These are individuals with criminal records, immigrants with work authorization, long-term unemployed and low-income workers, and veterans and military spouses.

The three partner organizations have seen a massive amount of interest from states in the consortium that want to remove barriers to licensure for veterans and military spouses. We have seen 5 main strategies being employed by states within the consortium to help remove barriers for this population.

1. Recognition of Military Training, Education and Experience

Example: Rhode Island requires each member of a licensing board to "accept education, training or service completed by an individual as a member of the Armed Forces or Reserves of the United States [or] the National Guard of any state...toward the qualifications to receive the license or certification (R.I. Gen. Laws §5-87-1)."

2. Alternative Paths to Licensure in Certain Occupations

Many states have enacted legislation to ease licensing burdens for veterans in specific occupations, often those regarded as most applicable to a military skill set or where critical needs exist. These occupations include truck drivers, emergency medical technicians, law enforcement officers and others. Alternative paths to licensure are designed to offer veterans an opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency in a certain trade in order to bypass the normal licensing process. For skilled veterans with similar but not identical experience, licensing regulations can be written so that accredited education institutions are required to review a veteran's training and coursework toward attaining certain credentials. They can also recommend options for awarding course credit for relevant military training or for allowing a veteran to enter into a program with advanced standing. Another way to provide accelerated education opportunities is through "bridge



programs” specially designed to fill in the gaps in training, without requiring veterans to repeat or duplicate education or training they received while serving.

Examples: Ohio offers an expedited veterans paramedic certification program for certain applicants who received military training (Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §4765.161). Others who are not deemed immediately eligible for the program receive credit for their past military training and are required to complete only what is necessary for certification.

3. Licensure by Exam

Veterans can be licensed by exam to help minimize the degree to which they are required to duplicate coursework that is repetitive of their military instruction. In many cases, states require completion of an approved civilian training program in order to sit for a licensure exam, so states can choose to waive the training requirement for veterans to sit for the exam.

Example: The Wisconsin Law Enforcement Accelerated Development Program allows veterans separated from the military within the last three years and with at least one year of experience as a military police officer to take a certification exam with no additional civilian training.

4. Expedited Application Review

Another means of reducing the burden of this form of regulation on veterans is to establish a “fast lane” for expedited review of applications. This can be done by prioritizing veterans’ applications within the normal process, reducing the number of administrative documents they must submit to complete their application, or waiving certain requirements that take time to review.

Examples: In Kentucky (2018 Ky. Acts, Chap. 58), boards must process applications within 30 days, respectively, for veterans who hold an equivalent license in another state, the District of Columbia, or any territory.

Maryland law requires each health occupations board to issue a license to a qualified veteran within 15 days of receiving the application (Md. Health Occupations Code Ann. §1-704).

5. Reduction of Limitations Based on Military Discharge Status

Licensing laws often disallow veterans who received less than honorable discharges from being eligible for licensure, even if all other requirements are met and the circumstances surrounding the discharge are unlikely to influence the veteran’s ability to safely perform their job. One option for addressing this is for licensing authorities to be granted more discretion to make determinations on a case-by-case basis. A more prescriptive option is for lawmakers to only allow denial due to less than honorable discharge when the discharge was prompted by an event relevant to the occupation.

Examples: Kansas boards may grant licensure to a veteran who meets statutory requirements, but received a discharge of less than honorable (Kan. Stat. Ann. §48-3406). In addition, the Virginia Medic and Corpsman Program accepts veterans who were discharged under “conditions other than dishonorable (Va. Code § 2.2-2001.4).”



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The Council of State Governments echoes what many others have said so far this morning. States need to figure out how to help licensing boards translate military experience into credit toward licensure in order to help reduce the barriers into entering a profession they would otherwise be qualified for. CSG does not lobby for certain types of legislation, but based on the work we have seen in the consortium, this bill aligns with what other states are trying to do to remove occupational licensing barriers for veterans.