

Testimony

Senate VAEP Credit for Military Experience for Civilian Licensure or Certification

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Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

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The Adjutant General

Good morning, it is an honor and a privilege to be here today to discuss the additional improvements that need to be made to the Commonwealth's professional licensure and certification process in order to aid our veterans and service members in receiving credit for the military training, education and experience that they obtained while serving our country and the Commonwealth..

The issue of evaluating military training, education and experience and translating it into credit for civilian licensure and certification is an ongoing challenge. It continues to be an area of concern and focus for the Department of Defense (DOD) as well as many federal and state legislators. Our nation's military produces some of the most highly qualified professionals in the U.S. workforce, however, there is a disconnect between those qualifications and the ability to obtain licensure and certifications in the civilian sector. In order to remedy the disconnect for Commonwealth veterans and service members, it is necessary for us to improve our licensure and certification process in order to facilitate the translation of those qualification into their civilian equivalents. In so doing, we will also provide Commonwealth employers with access to a viable and sustainable pool of professionals whose know-how and work ethics are already battle tested.

Your continued efforts to improve the licensure and certification processes are greatly appreciated. However, these attempts are only one part of the solution. We need the DOD to: 1) establish a uniform method of translating a service member's military training, education and work experience into easily understandable civilian terms; 2) provide each veteran and service member with a diploma and educational transcript that sets for the curriculum that the individual successfully completed in the military; and 3) provide documentation that accurately describes all of the veterans and service members relevant military work experience. This is no easy task given that the United States Armed Forces are all tremendously diverse in mission and requirements and there are nearly a thousand military specialties that are service specific.

The 2018 National Defense Authorization Act included a provision that required the United States Government Accountability Office to conduct an assessment of the plethora of existing benefits and programs geared toward assisting service members with finding meaningful civilian employment. This assessment focused solely on federal programs and found that there are 45

programs that provide education, employment and self-employment services to service members, veterans and their families. Sixteen of those programs provide veterans and service members with assistance in obtaining any required civilian occupational licensure and certification but the quality of the programs offered differed greatly. Some are simply basic websites that contain little usable information about how to actually obtain required civilian licensure and certifications. This is certainly an area that the DOD should be urged to standardize. It should be noted, however, that the DOD does offer programs that provide financial assistance related to licensure and certification testing.

The individual veterans and service members must be proactive when seeking professional licensure and certification. Many colleges and universities provide assistance with the translation of military training, education and work experience into easily understandable civilian terms. Many colleges and universities also provide assessments to determine the qualification level of veterans and services members. Veterans and service members must seek out and avail themselves of these opportunities to obtain assistance.

The Commonwealth has achieved some significant legislative successes with improvements to licensing and certification for veterans, service members and their spouses. Act 23 of 2015 improved the license renewal process for veterans and service members. Act 133 of 2015 waived the commercial driver's license skills testing requirement for active military members and veterans. Finally, Act 143 of 2016, required the Department of Education to expedite the issuance of permanent teaching college certifications for veterans, military members, and their spouses.

Conclusion

I thank the Committee for this opportunity to discuss how we can improve the Commonwealth's professional licensure and certification process in order to aid our veterans and service members in receiving credit for their military training, education and experience. We are appreciative of the improvements already made on this subject by the General Assembly in previous sessions. DMVA will continue to urge the DOD to provide better documentation to veterans and service members transitioning into the civilian workplace. Together, I am hopeful that we can improve

the support that we provide to our Commonwealth veterans and service members and do more to welcome these highly trained professionals into the Commonwealth's civilian workforce.