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OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

March 2, 2023

Vermont General Assembly
House Committee on Health Care
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Rep. Lori Houghton
Chair

Remarks of
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Testimony in support of: H.282, An Act Relating to the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact

The Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to support the policies proposed in Vermont House Bill 282, An Act Relating to the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact, which addresses licensing issues affecting our service members and their families. The purpose of the compact is to facilitate interstate practice of professional psychological services with the goal of reducing regulatory barriers and increasing access to mental healthcare.

My name is Melissa Willette. I am the New England Regional Liaison for the United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. Each liaison represents the Department and works with state officials, policy makers, and stakeholders regarding issues that affect military service members, veterans and their families.

To address license portability for military spouses, states have turned to occupational licensure interstate compacts, which streamline relicensing between member States of a compact for all practitioners in an occupation and provide specific support for military spouses of relocating active-duty personnel through provisions recognizing unique requirements of military life. This is significant for the military community in that along with active-duty military spouses receiving the benefit of compacts, active-duty members, members of the reserve component, reserve component spouses, transitioning service members and other veterans benefit from the mobility provided through the compact.

The Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact, also known as PSYPACT, is supported by the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards and allows credentialed psychologists to

practice telepsychology under the authority of PSYPACT, and or practice temporary, in-person face-to-face psychology.¹

In accordance with the compact’s “privilege to practice telepsychology” policy, member states of the compact recognize the right of a psychologist to practice once they have obtained an “E. Passport” from the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards as well as an “APIT”, which is an Authority to Practice Interjurisdictional Telepsychology. Similarly, those credentialed psychologists who wish to practice in a face-to-face setting must apply for and obtain an Interjurisdictional Practice Certificate. The certificate grants temporary authority to practice, based on notification to the state psychology regulatory authority, of the applicants intention to practice temporarily and verification of one’s qualifications for such practice.

Passage of PSYPACT would also create and establish a public agency known as the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact Commission. The commission is the governing body of PSYPACT, and will be responsible for creating and finalizing the bylaws, rules and regulations. The Commission is also responsible for granting psychologists the authority to practice telepsychology and temporary in-person, face-to-face practice of psychology across state boundaries as stated above.²

There are currently 36 states participating in PSYPACT, and if passed, Vermont would be the fifth New England State to join. This could be particularly important when considering the treatment of our nation’s service members and veterans. Consider members of the Vermont National Guard for example. Ensuring National Guard members are able to receive proper psychological services when living in a state other than where their National Guard unit is located would allow for greater access to treatment and solve known barriers to care. Expanded mental health treatment opportunities directly benefit those who have served our nation.

Taking care of our people remains the top priority of the Department of Defense, and is at the center of our National Defense Strategy.³ Military spouses provide the strong foundation upon which their loved ones in uniform stand, and both our communities and Nation rely on their resilience, and to further expand employment opportunities for military spouses, the Department has been directed to accelerate the passage of interstate licensure compacts to ease a burden for spouses who must go through the often challenging and frustrating process of transferring their professional licenses with each move.⁴

¹ Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards, <https://www.asppb.net/>

² PSYPACT: Advancing the Interjurisdictional Practice of Psychology, <https://psypact.org/page/About>

³ Terri Moon Cronk, Austin Outlines His Top Three Priorities on Defense, People, Teamwork, United States Department of Defense, March 5, 2021, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2526532/austin-outlines-his-top-three-priorities-on-defense-people-teamwork/>

⁴ Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Taking Care of Our Service Members and Their Families (Memorandum for Senior Leadership), United States Department of Defense, September 22, 2022, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Sep/22/2003083398/-1/-1/0/TAKING-CARE-OF-OUR-SERVICE-MEMBERS-AND-FAMILIES.PDF>

There are many unique requirements that come with a life of service in the United States armed forces, and those requirements are not only bestowed on the service member, but also on the spouses and children of those who serve.⁵

For military spouses in particular, professional licensing requirements remain an enduring challenge. Due to the nature of the military, most active-duty service members change duty stations every few years. Not only is the service member expected to reacquaint themselves with a new installation, unit, and command, the spouse too is forced to reinvent themselves professionally. The Interstate Counseling Compact will allow counseling professionals to transcend these boundaries.⁶

Frequent moves and cumbersome licensing and certification requirements limit career options for military spouses. Removing these barriers, creating reciprocity in licensing requirements, and facilitating placement opportunities can help a military family's financial stability, speed the assimilation of the family into its new location, and create a desirable new employee pool for a state.

With the above stated benefits in mind, we look forward to engaging in efforts that will create increased quality of life for all populations we aim to serve. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the policies contained in House Bill 282, and thank the bill sponsors, Representatives Houghton, Berbeco, Black, Cordes and Goldman for introducing this legislation.

Again, thank you for your attention and consideration of these policies. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this provided testimony.

Respectfully,

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⁵ The annual percent of the military spouse population that moves across state lines is 14.5% compared to their civilian counterparts at 1.1%. As much as 34% of military spouses in the labor force are required to be fully licensed; and of those spouses, 19% experience license maintenance difficulties.

⁶ National Center for Interstate Compacts. "What will these interstate compacts achieve?"
<https://compacts.csg.org/our-work/ics/>