



MANPOWER AND
RESERVE AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

February 20, 2025

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

**Rep. Alyssa Black, Chair
Rep. Francis McFaun, Vice Chair**

**Remarks of
Melissa J. Willette
New England Region Liaison
United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office**

H. 47, An act relating to Vermont's adoption of the Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact

The Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to support the policies reflected in H.47, regarding the Dental and Dental Hygienist Compact, a measure to reduce barriers to dentists and dental hygienists and employment in Vermont.

My name is Melissa Willette and I am the New England Region Liaison for the Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. We represent the Department and engage state leaders across the country on policies that negatively impact our service members and their families. These are identified by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, and the National Guard Bureau as areas where states can play a crucial role.

The Department of Defense has advocated for improved licensure and career portability for military service members and their spouses for several years. Military spouses are disproportionately affected by state-specific professional licensing requirements that can cause delays and gaps in employment, with thirty-six percent requiring a state license to practice in their professions and an annual cross-state relocation rate more than ten times higher than their civilian counterparts. Accordingly, military spouses experience unemployment and underemployment at significantly higher rates than their civilian peers.

State policies enacting interstate licensure compacts, such as the Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact, relieve one of the many stressors of frequent military moves by enabling military spouses to transfer their licenses more quickly across state lines and obtain employment as soon as they relocate to a new state. These policies facilitate greater career sustainability for military spouses, improving their families' financial security and overall resilience.

Interstate licensure compacts benefit not only military spouses, but also apply to all eligible professionals to include active-duty service members, members of the reserve components, veterans, and civilians. By continuing to enact these beneficial policies, Vermont can expand the

opportunity to increase its workforce available to serve the local community while continuing in its great tradition of providing an extraordinary degree of support to our military families as they move into and out of the state.

In closing, the Department of Defense is very appreciative of Vermont's ongoing commitment and efforts to support members of the military and their families who sacrifice so much in service to our country. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to offer comments in support of this policy proposal.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have.

Very Respectfully,

**WILLETTE.MELISSA.
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