

January 24, 2022

TO: Chairman Tomlinson, Madam Chair Boscola, and Members of the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee

FROM: Heather Tyler, Vice President, State Legislative Advocacy

SUBJECT: Support for HB 1868: Professional Licensing for Veterans, Service Members, and Spouses

On behalf of more than 240 members statewide, The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) expresses its support for House Bill 1868, sponsored by Representative Zach Mako (R-Lehigh/Northampton). This measure has passed the House and is scheduled for consideration in the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee tomorrow, January 25.

The health care workforce shortage has been a significant concern for many years, both nationally and in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania has been acutely affected by the workforce crisis, which has been compounded by the current record-breaking surge of COVID-19. In a recent survey of Pennsylvania's hospitals, initial findings showed an increase in vacancy and turnover rates across the continuum of care. Nursing personnel—staff RNs who provide direct care—had a 29 percent increase in vacancy rate and a 37 percent increase in turnover rate from 2019 to 2021.

This is a complex problem, requiring many innovative solutions. House Bill 1868 is one opportunity to address the health care workforce crisis by easing entry into the medical field for veterans, service members, and their spouses.

Bill 1868 directs the Pennsylvania Department of State to:

- Use the Military Occupational Codes Crosswalk to help translate military experience into civilian licensure requirements
- Consider military experience acquired when determining if a military person meets qualification for licensure
- Expedite application review for veterans and military spouses, and waive initial licensure fees for military spouses upon coming to Pennsylvania

Many members of the U.S. Armed Forces have earned medical skills and training under some of the most extreme conditions imaginable. And when soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and guardsmen serve, they don't do it alone. Only 1 percent of civilian spouses move across state lines each year; in the military community, it's nearly 15 percent. Of those in the labor force, more than 30 percent of military spouses require professional licensure.



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Acknowledging and respecting military experience and supporting credentialed spouses can provide another viable pathway into the critical health care positions our communities so desperately need. In the broad context of professional licensure, House Bill 1868 is a step in the right direction.

On behalf of Pennsylvania hospitals, as well as current and future licensed health care professionals and the patients they serve, we respectfully ask that you vote yes on House Bill 1868.