



MANPOWER AND  
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## OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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

January 29, 2024

**Rhode Island General Assembly  
House Committee on Corporations  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903**

**Rep. Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.  
Chair**

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

### **HB 7141, An Act Relating To Businesses and Professions – Counseling Compact**

Mr. Chairman, and honorable members of the committee. I write on behalf of the Department of Defense to request your consideration of the policies outlined in HB 7141, An Act Relating To Businesses and Professions – Counseling Compact. Much like other licensing compacts the Department supports, the Counseling Compact is a best practice approach for one of DoD's ten priority key issues for personnel and readiness.

The Interstate Counseling Compact supports relocating Active-Duty military spouses, increases public access to counseling services, and enhances public safety and cooperation in regulating multistate practice.

Of additional benefit is the compact's utilization of a mutual recognition model of interstate practice, which enhances opportunities of portable careers for military spouses by providing consistent rules which allow licensed members to work in other states through "privilege to practice policies", or more easily transfer their license to a new state.

To date, 32 states have joined the Interstate Counseling Compact, and 10 states have legislation pending to include the State of Rhode Island. The compact has the potential to significantly change the way counselors can practice and will provide continuity of care as well as the ability of counselors to reach underserved populations.

Your consideration of this issue in the 2024 legislative session is greatly appreciated. Military spouses, while not wearing a uniform, serve alongside our active-duty military members, and their sacrifices often go unnoticed. Most of our military families rely on two incomes to meet their financial needs, and many military spouses hold professional licenses. These professionals are disproportionately affected by state-specific licensure requirements that can cause delays and gaps in employment, especially when they are forced to relocate every few years as part of their family's service obligation.

The Counseling Compact will increase license portability for counseling professionals in Rhode Island, support military families, and improve access to counseling services for Ocean State residents, while maintaining the current system of state licensure.

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 7141.

I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this provided testimony and can be reached at [melissa.j.willette3.civ@mail.mil](mailto:melissa.j.willette3.civ@mail.mil) or 703-623-2035.

Respectfully,

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