



February 11, 2020

House Bill 349

**Occupational and Professional Licensing - Service Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses -
Revisions to Reciprocity Requirements
*Economic Matters***

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 349. My name is Katie Rogers and I am the Vice President of Outreach and Government Affairs at the Foundation for Government Accountability (FGA). FGA is a non-profit policy organization that develops welfare, work, and health care solutions to advance the power of work and empower millions to create their American Dream. HB349 will help credentialed workers obtain employment by ensuring Maryland's occupational licensing process accounts for the work experience of qualified, practicing professionals.

For those serving our country in the military, uprooting, and starting over is a part of life. Active service members, their spouses, and veterans understand the toll frequent moves can take on a family, especially when it comes to finances. In fact, military spouses are ten times more likely to move compared to their civilian counterparts, creating obstacles to finding meaningful employment for the 35 percent of those spouses who work in licensed or certified occupations.¹

Maryland, like most states, has a law on the books to facilitate licensure for service members, veterans, and military spouses in order to make it easier for these folks to continue working following a move. Unfortunately, also like most states, Maryland's current process could be improved to ensure those who have sacrificed to protect our country are afforded a greater level of work stability when they move to Maryland.

HB349 would simplify the licensing process. If a service member, veteran, or military spouse has an occupational license in another state, they may continue their profession in Maryland without needless delay. Importantly, though, licensing is not automatic. This bill contains prudent safeguards. Incoming workers cannot have a disqualifying criminal history, must be in good standing, establish residency, and have held a license for at least a year in another state.

Streamlining the licensing process will improve the lives of service members, their spouses, and veterans by creating more opportunities for them as they make their homes here. It will also benefit their neighbors—because consumers need and want the services these professionals provide—as well as Maryland employers who have a remarkable 134,000 job openings.² HB349 is certainly a step in the right direction, but Maryland should consider applying the policy embodied in the bill to tradespeople from all walks of life and all types of industry, thereby incentivizing them to move here, find work, pay taxes, and integrate into their communities.

Thank you.

¹ Military OneSource, "Supporting our Military Families: Best Practices for Streamlining Occupational Licensing Across State Lines," U.S. Department of the Treasury and U.S. Department of Defense (2012), <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/leaders-service-providers/sp-l-spouse-education-and-career-opportunities/occupational-licensing-and-military-spouses-report>

² Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey Program, "JOLTS Experimental State Estimates," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), https://www.bls.gov/jlt/jlt_statedata.htm