

House of Representative Health and Human Services Committee

Written Testimony on Senate Bill No. 77

March 8, 2021

Dear Chairwoman Landwehr and Members of the Committee

My name is Allison Winters, and I am the Vice President of Professional Practices with the Kansas Speech-Language Hearing Association, (KSHA). I have been a practicing speech language pathologist, (SLP) since 1998 and want to share why I am in support of SB 77. As a former military spouse, I believe this Bill will help practicing SLP's and audiologists whose families are stationed across Kansas. In May 2003, my husband became an active-duty Captain in the United States Air Force. In early June we found that our first station would be Dyess AFB in Abilene, Texas. At the time, I had been a practicing speech-language pathologist in Kansas for five years. I quickly began the process of securing my Texas speech-language licensure but based on our military schedule, I had only one month to research the details required to obtain the Texas SLP license. Even though I initiated the process the same week as we found out our station, many potential employers would not hire an SLP until they had a Texas SLP license in hand. My Kansas licensure did nothing to help me during those weeks of waiting. I eventually received my licensure nine weeks from the day I made my first phone call to the Texas agency handling licensure. Meanwhile, this delay in moving also put a halt to my stepson's speech-language services for dyslexia as we were moving across state lines. His Kansas therapist was not licensed in Texas and therefore could not continue seeing him for services, nor could we quickly find a Texas therapist that specialized in the area of dyslexia. This delay in service cost him several weeks of interrupted therapy and a regression in progress.

Within ten years of being an SLP, I had held five separate SLP licenses from different states. Each licensure fee ranged between \$70 to \$150.00. Each time we had a permanent change of station, (PCS), and moved within the military, the process was similar to the experience in Texas. There were weeks of uncertainty while I waited to obtain the next SLP license in our new state. My stepson waited to find another therapist. Though I always found a job after a new move, my son and I lost precious months waiting for various licensures to be approved. My resume had gaps of one to three months each time we were called to another station. We eventually separated from the military in part because of the inconsistency of my career, my stepson's dyslexia therapy, and the hardship of a new move every two years.

Since then, both the military and the Department of Labor have seen the importance of helping military spouses as they experience gaps in employment and costly interruptions in their career trajectory due to frequent relocations. In 2018, the National Defense Authorization Act was created for military spouses. It allows each service branch to reimburse spouses up to \$1,000 for re-licensure and certification costs resulting from relocations or PCS moves that cross US state lines. This Act also allows *certain* professions such as teachers, nurses, physical therapists, and other health care workers to have *expedited* licensure when relocating to another state. These professions have been specifically identified because their national organizations fought to provide military family members a faster way to gain licensure no matter which state they practice. Unfortunately, speech-language pathologists and audiologists have been not been added to that list.

Supporting SB 77 and allowing Kansas to enter the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association Inter-State Compact would specifically aid those military spouses and children currently living in Ft. Riley, McConnell, and Ft. Leavenworth. SB 77 would allow a way for military families to quickly begin new employment and a continuity of care.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to present this written testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allison Winters, M.Ed. CCC-SLP". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

Allison Winters, M. Ed, CCC-SLP
Speech-Language Pathologist
Certificate of Clinical Competence
KSHA VP of Professional Practices