

Oral Testimony, Emma Kaufman
Veterans Affairs Committee Hearing on S.B. 212
Tuesday February 25, 2014

Distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Emma Kaufman and I am a student in Yale Law School's Veterans Legal Services Clinic. As part of that clinic, I represent the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, and I helped to staff the Military Occupational Specialty Task Force. I am also here as a military spouse whose husband will soon face the transition from war to the Connecticut workforce.

Two bills before you today, S.B. 212 and H.B. 5299, would help military spouses find jobs and help veterans join the workforce and go back to school. CVLC advocates several amendments to these bills. We support adding language to provide temporary licenses not only for spouses of *veterans*, but also for spouses of active duty service members. We would make standard educational credits mandatory, and we would include data collection requirements. With those amendments, CVLC strongly supports passage of S.B. 212, for three reasons.

First, S.B. 212 is common sense. To join the civilian workforce, veterans *need* to get licenses. One third of all workers are licensed, and jobs that require licenses pay better wages than jobs that don't. Licensed job sectors are also projected to grow faster over the next decade. This data makes especially counterproductive to stall veterans licensing. There is no good reason to make a crane operator or truck driver re-train for her job after she returns from Afghanistan. There is no good reason to make an experienced engineer re-take engineering 101. Under our current licensing scheme, EMTs are cleaning bedpans rather than saving lives. Military spouses also feel the burden of outdated licensing. I have seen many friends worry that they could not work as nurses or teachers once their spouses were re-stationed. Military spouses move across

state lines ten times as frequently as civilians. Today, 90% of military spouses are underemployed.

Second, S.B. 212 also brings Connecticut up to date with more than a dozen other states. As a researcher for the Task Force, I conducted an extensive review of military credentialing efforts across the country. Connecticut lags behind places like New York and Maryland, which recently passed a law including comprehensive data collection. Connecticut needs to amend and pass SB 212 to remain competitive with our neighbors.

Third, S.B. 212 is fair. Veterans face obstacles when they come home from war, from difficulty finding work to a higher risk of substance abuse and depression. As a military spouse, I can tell you that supporting a service member involves many obstacles of its own. Outdated and inefficient licensing laws should not be one of these obstacles. Connecticut owes it to veterans to pass this bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. If you have any questions, I am happy to answer them.