

February 23, 2021

Dear Chairman Olson and Members of the Committee,

As a licensed and practicing educator in Kansas and a former active duty military spouse, I submit this testimonial to you in support of the passing of SB 137.

Like many other professionals across the state, my seeds were planted in Kansas by a United States Armed Forces entity. During my husband's eight years of active duty service, we received orders for three permanent changes of duty station; the last being Fort Riley. Upon arrival, I held two current educator licenses from two different states.

Despite having been fingerprinted several times and passing the licensure exams in those states, I was asked to complete the process again. I first received a one-year nonrenewable license which allowed me to quickly secure a position, but only for seven months. To advance to an initial license for another two years, an additional PRAXIS content examination was required per state guidelines in an area for which I already held an out-of-state endorsement. Two years later, following attainment of experience from an accredited institution in Kansas and more professional development, I was able to apply for and receive a professional license for five years. In the first four years of my career in Kansas, extensive time and fees were incurred for fingerprinting, credential examinations, and three separate application costs for licenses. In addition, the processing time for licensure applications in Kansas exceeds that of many other states.

The time is not more imperative than now to enact change as districts across the state continue to struggle to recruit and fill vacant teaching and administrator positions. I speak for myself and on behalf of the many military spouses I know, when I say that the sheer number of steps, additional licensing requirements, monetary funds, and length of the present procedure are deterrents for highly skilled and talented individuals. An untapped pool of qualified candidates in military dependents exists in a period of chronic educator shortages. Kansas is a beautiful state and offers bountiful opportunity, but many are not accessing those prospects as the barriers may seem too large.

The Board's vision for Kansas education is to "lead the world in the success of each student." What better way to accomplish this goal than to acknowledge and encourage models of everyday resiliency and civic engagement to occupy schools and touch the lives of children? The military life innately poses challenges to service members and their families. Passing this legislation not only offers one less stressor, but also sends the message that the worldly perspectives and broad experiences brought to Kansas via the military is celebrated and recognized as a benefit to all culturally and economically.

The passage of SB 137 would no doubt be a solid feat as well as an attractive and welcoming feature to out-of-state applicants. I thank you greatly for your time, dedication, and attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,

Courtney Eichhorn