

GOLDWATER I N S T I T U T E

February 12, 2020
Representative Sean Tarwater
Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

re: HB 2506 welcomes workers by recognizing out-of-state occupational licenses

Dear Chairman Tarwater and Members of the Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development,

I am writing regarding HB 2506, which directs Kansas's licensing entities to grant occupational licenses to skilled professionals who currently hold a valid out-of-state occupational license. Under HB 2506, a licensed professional relocating to Kansas can apply for a license in his or her field and be approved quickly, saving time and money and encouraging a more seamless transition into the workforce. This is good for workers, their families, employers, and the state.

HB 2506 does not challenge licensing or delicense any profession in Kansas. Rather, this bill removes the unnecessary redundancy that comes with requiring professionals to repeat testing and duplicate training in order to continue doing a job they've already been doing safely and productively elsewhere. Workers are still required to apply, demonstrate that they have held a valid license at their desired practice level, and pay any related fees. Under this proposal, applicants may not be granted a license to practice in Kansas if they are the subject of an investigation, have a pending complaint, or have previously had their license revoked.

In 2019, Arizona became the first state in the nation to recognize out-of-state occupational licenses, a reform championed by the Goldwater Institute. Previously, Arizona granted licensing reciprocity to members of the military and their spouses; recognizing the success and value of this policy, Arizona's legislators acted to extend the reform to all residents. Arizona's law now allows a person who has held a license in good-standing for one year to be approved based on the education or training requirements of the originating state.

At the time, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey explained that, "We know that whether you make your living as a plumber, a barber, a nurse or anything else, you don't lose your skills simply because you pack up a U-Haul truck and make the decision to move to Arizona." Arizona's legislators agreed, passing the bill with bipartisan support in both houses of the legislature. Following Arizona's lead, Pennsylvania recently became the second state to adopt a version of universal recognition. Pennsylvania's bill was also a bipartisan success in both houses, and was signed into law by Governor Tom Wolf.

This session, a number of states across the country are considering legislation similar to HB 2506. At the time of this letter, 15 states from Alaska to New Hampshire have taken steps to reduce barriers to work in order to welcome workers with open arms, not red tape. Like Arizona, Kansas's economy benefits when employers are able to attract and retain skilled professionals. As America's workforce becomes increasingly mobile, professionals have more choices than ever about where they can live while pursuing their careers. By recognizing out-of-state occupational licenses, Kansas will send a strong message that it respects and values the training and experience of licensed professionals across the country, and signal that workers will find support and opportunity in the state.

With HB 2506, Kansas has the opportunity to become the **first state in the Midwest** to pass this commonsense, pro-growth economic policy, making the Sunflower State an even more attractive place to live and work.

Thank you,
Heather Curry
Director of Strategic Engagement

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