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*Testimony before the Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing and State-Federal Relations  
State Senator André Jacque  
January 15, 2020*

Chairman Kapenga and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding this hearing on Senate Bill 585, relating to license fee waivers for veterans' spouses.

Under current law, veterans are eligible for a fee waiver for certain licenses and certifications.

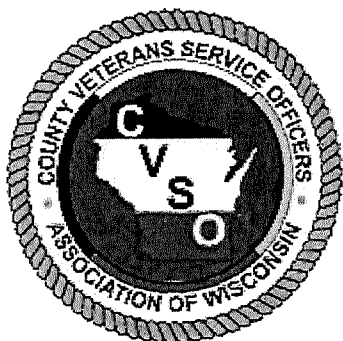
Unfortunately, while Wisconsin remains a leader in employing veterans, active duty military spouses face a 24% unemployment rate, and over 31% are working part-time even if they would prefer to work full-time. Blue Star Families 2016 survey estimated unemployment rates of military and veteran spouses combined to be 21 percent and in June 2017, Hiring Our Heroes released a survey on military spouses in the workplace citing an unemployment rate for active duty and veteran spouses of 16 percent, illustrating how military service inherently burdens the ability of a dual-income family from, in fact, being a dual-income family.

Research by the Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families finds that up to 35 percent of military spouses are employed in fields that require licensure, primarily in health- and education-related fields in high state workforce demand. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), "Military spouses may be deterred by the high cost of licensure, particularly those who have experienced frequent moves. To reduce the number of military spouses who leave the workforce because of these costs, licensing authorities can grant specific fee waivers to these individuals."

This bill expands eligibility to include the spouse of any veteran included in the current license fee waiver program.

This proposal is supported by the Wisconsin American Legion, the County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs), the Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans and the Wisconsin Disabled American Veterans (DAV).

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 585.



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January 15, 2019

Chair Kapenga, Vice-Chair Craig, and Members of the Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing, and State-Federal Relations,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on Senate Bill 585, relating to license fee waivers for veterans' spouses. I am Jim Quattromani, member of the legislative committee for County Veterans Service Officer Association of Wisconsin. Our association supports this bill.

The fee waiver for certain licenses and certifications is a crucial benefit for Wisconsin's veterans, rewarding their past service to the country along with their ongoing contributions to the civic and economic vitality of the state. It is also one of a number of powerful incentives to veterans who hold professional and occupational licenses to come live and work in Wisconsin.

Expanding the fee waiver to the spouses of veterans is both good policy and the right thing to do. It reflects the modern reality of military service, where the family that stands by a veteran and supported them through their service has sacrificed every bit as much as the veteran themselves. This is, of course, all the more true in the case of the surviving spouse of a veteran.

It also reflects the reality of the many and varied roles that spouses play in the modern working family. Military and veteran spouses are so often professionals, small-business owners, and tradespersons in their own right. Easing the burden on these spouses is the right thing to do for the service they and their spouse have done for the country and incentivizes these hardworking and worthy Wisconsinites to stay engaged in our workforce.

Once again, our association supports the passage of Senate Bill 585. Subject to your questions, this concludes our testimony.

James M. Quattromani  
Legislative Committee Member  
CVSO Association of Wisconsin



**FULFILLING OUR PROMISES**  
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED

## **Department of Wisconsin**

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD**  
**AL LABELLE**  
**DAV BENEFITS PROTECTION TEAM LEADER**  
**DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC BENEFITS, LICENSING**  
**AND STATE-FEDERAL REALATIONS**  
**WISCONSIN STATE SENATE**  
**JANUARY 15, 2020**

Chairman Kapenga, Vice Chair Craig, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing DAV (Disabled American Veterans) this opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 585 (SB 585) Relating to: *license fee waivers for veterans' spouses*.

Each year, DAV helps more than 1 million veterans with Benefits, Transportation, Advocacy, Employment, and Volunteerism. Over Eighty-five percent (85%) of our total expenditures go to Service.

One of our priorities is finding employment for U.S. military veterans and their spouses. In fact today DAV will be sponsoring a Military Spouse Virtual Career Expo.

Each year DAV holds two Veterans Job Fairs in Wisconsin for veterans and their spouses. For the past 2 years the Fairs were held at Miller Park in Milwaukee. This year they will be held in the months of May and September at a site to be determined.

Briefly, the license fee waivers for veterans' spouse was signed into law as Wisconsin Act 209 on April 4, 2012 and on July 1, 2012, Act 209 created a program which required Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) to

establish and maintain a program which thirteen (13) State Agencies will grant fee waivers to qualified veterans when issuing initial licenses.

Under the Veterans Professional/Occupational Licensure Fee Waiver Program, there is only one initial license fee waiver allowed per applicant. Waivers may not be made for license renewals; they are for one initial license only.<sup>1</sup>

DAV Wisconsin feels expanding the veterans fee waiver program to include spouses, as stated in SB 585, is the right thing to do. Remember – “Not All Who Serve Wear a Uniform.”

We furthermore feel expanding this benefit to veterans’ spouses is potentially a useful tool in attracting transitioning veterans to reside in Wisconsin.

Pursuant to DAV National Resolution 202<sup>2</sup>, DAV Wisconsin supports SB 585 and urges this Committee to vote favorably on the bill and move it to the Senate for scheduling.

This concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. At this time, I will gladly answer any questions you or other Committee members may have.

<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 45, Subchapter IV, Assistance Programs, Statute 45.44 Veterans Fee Waiver Program.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution 202, *Support the adoption of programs and legislation to reduce barriers to employment, education and full use and access to other benefits earned through service in the military* passed at DAV National Convention held in Orlando, Florida on August 6, 2019.