

**Senate Committee on Commerce**

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 137**

**Presented by Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs**

**Tuesday, February 23, 2021**

Mister Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Kansas Chamber. The Kansas Chamber represents small, medium and large businesses of all industry segments across the state. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 137, which expands on our state's laws recognizing occupational licenses from other states for military members and spouses.

In 2019, Arizona became the first state in the nation to fully adopt reciprocity statutes for occupational licenses, recognizing the skills licensed individuals possess to remove barriers on employment for new Kansas residents. Just like SB 137, Arizona's HB 2569 amended their military spouse statute to include all new residents.

Governor Ducey of Arizona said it best- "There's dignity in all work. And 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 moved here."

Arizona is currently the fourth fastest growing state in the country. Their legislature recognized the need to ensure these individuals face as few barriers as possible for employment in their state while still protecting the public.

Arizona's HB 2569 allows for licensure reciprocity if someone has been licensed or certified for at least one year, while SB 137 states that the individual shall receive an occupational license, registration or certification if they have worked for at least three years in the occupation during the four years immediately preceding the application, or if the applicant holds a private certification in a state that does not use an occupational license or government certification and has worked for at least two years in the occupation.

SB 137 maintains existing protections for state licensing boards under current law if that individual has not been in "the active practice of the occupation during the two years preceding the application" by allowing for additional testing, training, education, etc. as the licensing board deems necessary to establish their ability to practice with reasonable skill and safety.

As the talent war grows more competitive, states must take proactive steps to attract and retain talent in all occupations. Eliminating the unnecessary barrier of entry into the Kansas workforce through occupational licensing is one giant step Kansas should adopt, if that individual has skills and training equivalent to Kansas standards and has been employed in their respective occupation in their previous state of residency.

In the 1950's, only five percent of U.S. jobs required an occupational license, while 30% of jobs require a license today. Two years ago, Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes committed a crime by flying his barber into the state of Florida to cut his hair prior to the Super Bowl. The crime was using a non-Florida licensed barber. This is a second-degree misdemeanor with a maximum penalty of 60 days in prison. This requirement has no impact on the public health or safety of Floridians but shows how these laws can become unnecessarily restrictive.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 137, and I am happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.