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Michigan Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Farnum Building, Room 110
123 West Allegan Street
Lansing, MI

RE: Consideration of HB 5288 and HB5289, Military Spouse Law Licensing

Michigan Senate Committee on the Judiciary:

The Military Spouse JD Network (MSJDN), a bar association for military spouse attorneys, hereby submits this written testimony in support of House Bills 5288 and 5289, which provide for a bar licensing accommodation for military spouse attorneys whose spouses are placed on active duty orders in Michigan. MSJDN hereby advocates for the Senate Committee on the Judiciary's approval of HB5288 and 5289. These bills are supported by MSJDN, and were introduced by Representative Robert Wittenberg, reported with recommendation by the House Committee on Government Operations and the House Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, and passed by the House on September 22, 2016 with 106 yeas and 1 nay. On October 18, 2016, the bills were transferred to your Committee for consideration, and we greatly appreciate your consideration and the opportunity and honor to testify to your Committee regarding the merits, needs and benefits of HB5288 and HB5289.

Military spouse attorneys are faced with a difficult choice each time their servicemember receives orders to a new jurisdiction. Military families move, on average, every two to three years. As attorneys, we must obtain a new bar license with every move if we want to continue to practice law and maintain the profession we love. Military moves are based on the needs of the service, with no regard for licensing restrictions or bar exam deadlines. It is expensive, time consuming, and exhausting to continually apply for a new bar license, study for a new exam, and wait for the bar exam results in each new jurisdiction.

The only certainty of military life is uncertainty. Military spouses do not decide where we live, or how long we live there. Our service members cannot turn down a transfer, or quit

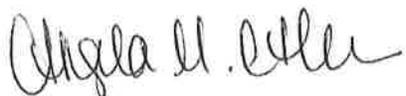
their jobs because a reassignment and move might not be best for their family. As their spouses, we take great pride in their service, and in our role as a military family. All we ask from our communities is a modest accommodation to make this difficult life slightly less so.

Since its founding in 2011, MSJDN attorneys have shared our challenges and stories with bar associations across the country. Telling our stories to educate our civilian legal colleagues about what it means to maintain our profession while serving our nation as military spouses has been very positive. We have seen great momentum across the country to support military spouse licensing, and now have licensing accommodations in 22 states and one U.S. territory, and at least 24 military spouse attorneys nationwide admitted through these new rules. Although our numbers are small, progress in each state makes a tremendous positive difference for every military spouse who is able to continue to work with each new move.

With the passage of HB5288 and HB5289, Michigan has an opportunity to demonstrate its strong support of our nation's military and their families. These bills represent a common sense accommodation; allowing temporary admission for military spouses without additional examination would recognize the tremendous sacrifices of our military families and would be an appropriate measure of appreciation considering their support for our nation.

MSJDN is truly grateful for your careful consideration of this important and timely issue. Your Committee's support, and hopefully the ultimate passage of HB5288 and HB5289 and submission to Governor Snyder, will prove a testament to the great support our military families receive from this state.

Sincerely,



Angela M. Allen
State Director

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