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September 8, 2016

Military and Veterans Affairs Committee
Michigan House of Representatives

Lansing, MI 48909

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

Dear Members of the Military and Veterans Affairs Committee:

The Military Spouse JD Network (MSJDN), a bar association for military spouses writes you today to offer our testimony in support of HB 5288 and HB5289 to the Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

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 servicemembers 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 17 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 issue. It is a testament to the great support our military families receive from this state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Josie Beets". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Josie Beets
President

Elizabeth Jamison
President-Elect