

January 30, 2018

RE: HB 18-1095

TO: House Education Committee

This letter is in support of HB 18-1095, as well as educators in our state who happen to be military spouses. I am one of those individuals. As a 28-year educator, I am a proud wife of a veteran of the U.S. Air Force. Though I am no longer in the classroom, I am committed to supporting my colleagues who are.

For many spouses of active duty armed force members, seeking a personal career which is compatible to the lifestyle and demands of an active duty military family member is a priority which often leads to the field of education. When I met my husband-to-be, I was told by many who had blazed the path before me that teaching was one of the best careers for a military spouse; after all, there are teaching jobs everywhere and often not enough people to fill them. I pursued the qualifications and credentials I thought I would need: I held a M.A. in Education from an accredited university as well as a New Mexico state PreK – 8 license with three specialized endorsements in my field. I also had more than 4 years of teaching experience with the same school district, all documented as a qualified and outstanding educator. We then moved to Colorado for the first time. I began the process to apply for a Colorado state professional teaching license and certification; unfortunately, my license and certifications were not accepted by the state. I was required to retake a national teacher exam, take additional college-level courses specific to Colorado subject areas, complete new teacher programs, and reapply for an initial teacher license. While I pursued this lengthy process at my own expense, I maintained my license and certification credentials in New Mexico, also at my own expense. During our time in Colorado, I taught with a public school district in alternative programs, as I was not able to secure a teaching position in a traditional classroom with an out of state license and the timing of our next upcoming move. At that time, there was no offer of a probationary license or any kind of interim authorization.

The Air Force moved us to places like Georgia, Ohio, and Nebraska. During the next many years, while our family supported the military mission through family separations, short-notice moves, deployments, and a range of duty stations, I continued to work to secure my teaching license in whichever state we lived. Some states granted me a temporary license and a waiver for my endorsements while others denied my application altogether and required me to restart as a new teacher would. Situations like short-term assignments and mid-year moves prevented me from accruing longevity or seniority in a position or school. While I believe in public education, I found the repeated process to be exhausting, frustrating, and expensive. I often sought out opportunities within the private education system in order to continue my professional path. I was not alone in doing so – our states have lost many qualified and outstanding educators simply because the process is too arduous.

I returned to Colorado a second time in 2009 and was happy to learn that the process had somewhat improved with regard to educator licensure and certification. I believe that there is still more progress to be made and that this bill is a significant step in the right direction. Reconsidering the 3-year consecutive experience requirement in one state is invaluable. Our military families often move every 2-3 years, making it impossible for the teaching spouse to acquire this requirement. By adapting this and continuing to look at the benefits that reciprocal licensure and certification would lend to our state's education potential, I believe that Colorado will enable qualified educators to continue their work in our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christine C. Baldwin