



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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MANPOWER AND
RESERVE AFFAIRS

January 15, 2021

The Honorable Mike Lefor
House Industry Business and Labor Committee
P.O. Box 564
Dickinson, ND 58602-0564

RE: HB 1278 – Unemployment Compensation for Military Spouses

Chairman Mike Lefor and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of military families and the Department of Defense, I am writing to express support for the policy changes proposed in HB 1278, a bill that addresses unemployment compensation for our military spouses.

My name is Jim Rickel and I am the Central Regional Liaison for the Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Military Community and Family Policy. Our mission is to be a resource to state policymakers as they work to address quality of life issues of military families.

In 48 states, military spouses are authorized to receive unemployment compensation when the leave employment due to a military transfer. Current North Dakota statute view a spouse leaving a job due to a military move as a “voluntary” separation when, in fact, they have no choice in the matter. Frequent moves required of military families add unique financial pressures, as spouses routinely lose income during such moves.

Granting unemployment compensation eligibility to working military spouses in transition provides a much-needed financial bridge for military families during mandatory moves, and supports spouses while they seek suitable employment. Unemployment compensation will also allow spouses to obtain necessary new licensing and credentials at their new location.

If structured properly, North Dakota can offer eligibility without economically penalizing the individual employer who lost the working spouse to the move. Payment comes from the state unemployment insurance fund maintained through an assessment of all employers. Military spouses represent a very small percentage of the unemployed

