

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Sponsor Statement House Bill 125

"An Act relating to private sector and state employment preferences for active service members, veterans, and spouses and dependent children of active service members and veterans; relating to employment preferences for surviving spouses of deceased service members and veterans; and relating to employment preferences for disabled veterans and former prisoners of war."

HB 125 seeks to extend the current private sector and state employment hiring preferences to military spouses and dependent children.

Military spouses are among the highest unemployed and underemployed group. They are highly educated and qualified for a range of careers but because of frequent moves the unemployment rate among military spouses is 24% and there is a 26% wage gap compared to civilian counterparts.

In 2019 the Blue Star Families Military Family Lifestyle Survey found that 49% of military spouses indicated that financial issues were the top stressor for military families, and 48% were concerned about employment. Of employed military spouses 75 % were considered underemployed. HB 125 can provide some help to reduce these concerns for military families by providing a hiring preference.

A Covid-19 Military Support Initiative created by the Blue Star Families and the Association of Defense Communities found that an additional 17% of military spouses lost their jobs during the pandemic on top of the 24% unemployment before the pandemic.

Currently 35 states and the District of Columbia provide hiring preferences to active-duty spouses or surviving spouses. HB 125 will add Alaska to this growing list of states that support our military community and honor the sacrifices these families make in service to our country.