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Representative Marie Woodson's Veteran-Friendly Legislation Passes House Floor

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - Today, [House Bill 139](#) sponsored by **Representative Marie Woodson's (D-Hollywood)** unanimously passed the House floor. **HB 139** helps veterans and spouses of veterans across the state of Florida acclimate to civilian life and attempts to alleviate the shortage in the health care industry.

Florida has a large military presence, including 21 military installations and over 69,000 military personnel. The state also has a significant veteran population of almost 1.5 million, many of whom are recently transitioned servicemembers. The Department of Health regulates health care practitioners and offers expedited licensing and fee waivers to veterans and their spouses who hold active licenses in other states, but there is currently no dedicated office to assist veterans and their spouses with these applications.

Additionally, while the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs provides benefits and services to veterans and their dependents, the law does not require them to provide these benefits to veterans' spouses. The nonprofit corporation, Veterans Florida, administers the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program, but they are not required to provide these services to veterans' spouses or assist them with access to health care professions.

HB 139 establishes the Office of Veteran Licensure Services, which will provide guidance and assistance to veterans and their spouses with health care licensure processes. The bill also requires Veterans Florida to provide services to veterans' spouses, including assistance with access, education and employment in health care professions and referrals to the Department of Health for licensure applications.

"I am proud to have passed this bill, to give back to those who have so selflessly served our country. I am grateful and thankful to everyone who has contributed to the passage of this bill. Too often, our veterans and their spouses have been left behind. We should never let that happen and we should always put these fearless fighters first. It is the least we can do for those who have given so much," said **Representative Woodson**.

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