

Date of Hearing: April 7, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS

Marc Berman, Chair

AB 1775 (Ward) – As Introduced February 9, 2026

NOTE: This bill is double referred and previously passed the Assembly Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs on an 8-0 vote.

SUBJECT: Veterans.

SUMMARY: Provides that an individual who received a discharge from the United States Armed Forces solely as a result of federal action to restrict military service by transgender individuals is eligible for programs administered by licensing entities within the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to assist honorably discharged military members and their spouses.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet). (Military and Veterans Code § 60)
- 2) Establishes the DCA within the Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency. (Business and Professions Code (BPC) § 100)
- 3) Enumerates various regulatory boards, bureaus, committees, and commissions under the DCA's jurisdiction, including healing arts boards under Division 2. (BPC § 101)
- 4) Defines "board" as also inclusive of "bureau," "commission," "committee," "department," "division," "examining committee," "program," and "agency." (BPC § 22)
- 5) States that boards within the DCA must establish minimum qualifications and levels of competency and license persons desiring to engage in the occupations they regulate, upon determining that such persons possess the requisite skills and qualifications necessary to provide safe and effective services to the public. (BPC § 101.6)
- 6) Provides that any licensee or registrant of any board within the DCA whose license expired while the licensee or registrant was on active duty as a member of the California National Guard or the United States Armed Forces, may, upon application, reinstate their license or registration without examination or penalty. (BPC § 114)
- 7) Requires boards within the DCA to waive renewal fees, continuing education requirements, and other renewal requirements as determined by the board, if any are applicable, for a licensee or registrant called to active duty as a member of the United States Armed Forces or the California National Guard. (BPC § 114.3)
- 8) Requires boards within the DCA to inquire in every application for licensure if the individual applying for licensure is serving in, or has previously served in, the military. (BPC § 114.5)
- 9) Extends protections for licensees or registrants whose licenses expire while on active duty to a licensee or registrant whose license was obtained while in the armed services. (BPC § 115)

- 10) Requires boards within the DCA to expedite, and authorizes boards to assist, the initial licensure process for an individual applicant who has served as an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States and was honorably discharged or who is enrolled in the United States Department of Defense SkillBridge program. (BPC § 115.4)
- 11) Requires most boards within the DCA to expedite the licensure process and waive any associated fees for an individual applicant who holds a current license in another state and who is married to, or in a domestic partnership or other legal union with, an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States who is assigned to a duty station in California under official active duty military orders. (BPC § 115.5)
- 12) Requires boards within the DCA to issue a temporary license to an applicant who is married to, or in a domestic partnership or other legal union with, an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States who is assigned to a duty station in California under official active duty military orders. (BPC § 115.6)
- 13) Requires the DCA to compile specified information on military and spouse licensure into an annual report for the Legislature. (BPC § 115.8)
- 14) Requires the DCA and boards within the DCA to publish information pertinent to all licensing options available to military spouses on the home page of the internet website of the department or board. (BPC § 115.9)
- 15) Conforms state law with federal requirements enabling the portability of professional licenses for servicemembers and military spouses. (BPC § 115.10)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Provides that a board within the DCA shall expedite, and may assist, the initial licensure process for an applicant who supplies satisfactory evidence to the board that the applicant has served as an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States and received a discharge solely as a result of Executive Order No. 14183 issued on January 27, 2025 in the same manner as an applicant who was honorably discharged.
- 2) Requires the DCA to include the number of applications for expedited licenses received from military members and military spouses who received a discharge solely as a result of Executive Order No. 14183 issued on January 27, 2025 in its annual report to the Legislature.
- 3) Requires CalVet to prioritize veteran recipients of services provided under the Veteran's Military Discharge Upgrade Grant Program who are able to demonstrate their less than honorable characterization of service was connected to a mental health condition, traumatic brain injury, sexual assault or harassment, or sexual orientation or who are able to demonstrate their characterization of service was connected to gender identity.
- 4) Requires CalVet to establish the Veteran's Housing and Supportive Services Grant Program and to prioritize veteran recipients of services provided under that program who are able to demonstrate their less than honorable characterization of service was connected to a mental health condition, traumatic brain injury, sexual assault or harassment, or sexual orientation or who are able to demonstrate their characterization of service was connected to gender identity.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown; this bill is keyed fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Purpose. This bill is co-sponsored by *Equality California*, *Out in National Security*, and *SPARTA Pride*. According to the author:

AB 1775 is a vital lifeline to ensure we provide critical housing, employment, and transition-to-civilian-life support for service members being discharged from the U.S. military as a result of President Donald Trump's Executive Order (EO) 14183, which targets transgender service members. California has a responsibility to step in when the federal government turns its back on people who served honorably. These service members are being forced out of service not because of misconduct or performance, but because of who they are. AB 1775 ensures that California does not compound that injustice by leaving veterans without housing, jobs, or a clear path to stability.

Background.

Expedited Licensure. The DCA consists of 36 boards, bureaus, and other entities responsible for licensing, certifying, or otherwise regulating professionals in California. As of the DCA's 2025 Annual Report, there are over 3.2 million licensees overseen by programs under the DCA. Each licensing program has its own unique requirements, with the governing acts for each profession establishing prerequisites including education, training, examination, and the payment of fees.

The average length of time between the submission of an initial license application and approval by an entity under the DCA can vary based on a number of circumstances, including increased workload, delays in obtaining an applicant's criminal history, and deficiencies in an application. Boards typically set internal targets for application processing timelines and seek adequate staffing in an effort to meet those targets consistently. License processing timelines are then regularly evaluated through the sunset review oversight process by the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions and the Senate Committee on Business, Professions, and Economic Development.

The Legislature has enacted laws requiring boards within the DCA to expedite the applications of certain applicants for licensure. The first expedited licensure laws specifically related to the unique needs of military families. The Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families found that up to 35 percent of military spouses are employed in fields requiring licensure. Because each state possesses its own licensing regime for professional occupations, military family members are required to obtain a new license each time they move states, with one-third of military spouses reportedly moving four or more times while their partner is on active duty. Because of the barriers encountered by military family members who seek to relocate their licensed work to a new state, it is understood that continuing to work in their field is often challenging if not impossible.

In an effort to address these concerns, AB 1904 (Block) was enacted in 2012 to require boards and bureaus under the DCA to expedite the licensure process for military spouses and domestic partners of a military member who is on active duty in California. Two years later, SB 1226 (Correa) was enacted to similarly require boards and bureaus under the DCA to expedite applications from honorably discharged veterans, with the goal of enabling these individuals to quickly transition into civilian employment upon retiring from service.

In 2023, the federal Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) imposed new requirements on states to recognize qualifying out-of-state licenses for service members and their spouses. This new form of enhanced license portability potentially displaces the need for expedited licensure for these applicants. In August 2024, the DCA received an award for its Federal Professional License Portability and State Registration Portal, which allows servicemembers and their spouses to apply online for registration in California under the SCRA.

Statute requires entities under the DCA to annually report the number of applications for expedited licensure that were submitted by veterans and active duty spouses and partners. For example, in Fiscal Year 2024-25, the Board of Registered Nursing MBC received 718 applications for a registered nurse license from honorably discharged veterans subject to expedited processing. Of these expedited applications, 456 resulted in the issuance of a license by the board.

Federal Treatment of Transgender Service Members. Transgender individuals have existed throughout human history, including within the Armed Forces. However, transgender people have long faced arbitrary and draconian obstacles to serving openly in the military. In 1963, the United States Army established Regulation 40-501, which banned transgender people from serving under the notion that they were “mentally unfit.”¹

In July 2015, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced the creation of “a working group to study the policy and readiness implications of welcoming transgender persons to serve openly.” The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness within the Department of Defense sponsored a study by the RAND National Defense Research Institute, which supported permitting transgender individuals to serve openly in the military.² In June 2016, the Obama Administration announced that it would allow transgender individuals to openly serve in the United States Armed Forces.³ However, this policy was reversed by the Trump Administration in August 2017 through a memorandum disqualifying transgender persons from military service.⁴ While federal courts initially issued injunctions delaying the effect of this discriminatory policy, the memorandum was ultimately allowed to take effect by the Supreme Court of the United States.⁵

In January 2021, President Joe Biden issued Executive Order 14004 – *Enabling All Qualified Americans to Serve Their Country in Uniform*. Declaring that “the All-Volunteer Force thrives when it is composed of diverse Americans who can meet the rigorous standards for military service, and an inclusive military strengthens our national security,” the Biden Administration formally established a policy “to ensure that all transgender individuals who wish to serve in the United States military and can meet the appropriate standards shall be able to do so openly and free from discrimination.” This executive order formally rescinded the policy established under the Trump Administration’s prior memorandum.

¹ Gaur, Vaishali. “The Legal History of LGBTQ+ People in the Military.” *FindLaw*, January 2025.

² Schaefer, Agnes Gereben, et al. *Assessing the Implications of Allowing Transgender Personnel to Serve Openly*. RAND Corporation, National Defense Research Institute, 2016.

³ “Secretary of Defense Ash Carter Announces Policy for Transgender Service Members.” *U.S. Department of Defense*, June 2016.

⁴ “Presidential Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security.” *Federal Register*, August 2017.

⁵ Stohr, Greg. “Supreme Court Lets Trump's Transgender Military Ban Take Effect.” *Bloomberg*, January 2019

When President Donald Trump took office for his second term in January 2025, he immediately reversed the actions of the Biden Administration in support of transgender service members. Executive Order 14183 – *Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness* referred to “radical gender ideology” within the Armed Forces established “to appease activists unconcerned with the requirements of military service like physical and mental health, selflessness, and unit cohesion.” President Trump’s executive order rescinded the Biden Administration’s policy of inclusion for transgender people in the military and prohibited the use of preferred pronouns for transgender service members.

The implementation of Executive Order 14183 has resulted in significant confusion and destabilized transgender service members subject to involuntary separation from the Armed Forces. The immediate effects of the Trump Administration’s policy have been chaotic and inconsistent, and the long-term effects of the policy on service members remain uncertain. In the meantime, the author contends that California law should expressly provide that programs intended to support honorably discharged service members obtain professional licenses are available to individuals discharged as a result of Executive Order 14183, regardless of how the discharge is officially processed by the Department of Defense. These programs enable veterans to more smoothly transition to civilian life by expediting their ability to enter into new careers requiring licensure or registration.

Veteran Programs Under CalVet. This bill would additionally establish new requirements for CalVet to help fund service providers who provide assistance to veterans. Specifically, the bill would require CalVet to prioritize veteran recipients under the Veteran’s Military Discharge Upgrade Grant Program who are able to demonstrate their less than honorable characterization of service was connected to a mental health condition, traumatic brain injury, sexual assault or harassment, or sexual. The bill would also require CalVet to establish a Veteran’s Housing and Supportive Services Grant Program, which would require similar prioritization of recipients. These provisions of the bill are within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, which previously heard and passed this bill.

Prior Related Legislation. AB 2442 (Gipson) of 2024 would have required state licensing boards under the DCA to prioritize applicants who demonstrate that they intend to provide gender-affirming health care or gender-affirming mental health care services. *This bill died in the Senate Committee on Business, Professions, and Economic Development.*

SB 143 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 196, Statutes of 2023 conformed state statutes with federal law enabling the portability of professional licenses for servicemembers and spouses if certain requirements are met.

AB 657 (Cooper), Chapter 560, Statutes of 2022 requires specified boards under the DCA to expedite applications from applicants who demonstrate that they intend to provide abortions.

AB 2113 (Low), Chapter 186, Statutes of 2020 requires entities under the DCA to expedite applications from refugees, asylees, and special immigrant visa holders.

SB 1226 (Correa), Chapter 657, Statutes of 2014 requires entities under the DCA to expedite applications from honorable discharged veterans.

AB 1904 (Block), Chapter 399, Statutes of 2012 requires entities under the DCA to expedite applications from military spouses and partners.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:

Equality California (EQCA) is a co-sponsor of this bill. EQCA argues that the bill “ensures eligibility for expedited professional licensing to support a smooth transition into civilian life, establishes no-cost housing services for discharged veterans, and prioritizes access to discharge upgrades through the Veteran’s Military Discharge Upgrade Grant Program.” EQCA further writes: “At a time when transgender people are facing unprecedented attacks across the country, AB 1775 ensures that transgender veterans who have served our country honorably are not abandoned and reaffirms California’s commitment to fairness and opportunity for all who serve.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION:

None on file.

REGISTERED SUPPORT:

Equality California (Co-Sponsor)
Out in National Security (Co-Sponsor)
SPARTA Pride (Co-Sponsor)
Advocates for Trans Equality
Alliance for Trans Youth Liberation
California Association of Veteran Service Agencies
California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls
California Legislative LGBTQ Caucus
California LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network
CalPride Valle Central
City of West Hollywood
Courage California
Disability Rights California
El/La Para TransLatinas
Families United for Trans Rights (FUTR) East Bay Chapter
Gender Affirming Professionals
Lavender Democrats OC
Lyon-Martin Community Health Services
Modern Military Association of America
National Women’s Law Center Action Fund
PFLAG Clayton-Concord
PFLAG Fresno
PFLAG San Francisco
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California
Public Counsel
Rainbow Families Action Bay Area
San Diego Pride
Service Women’s Action Network
Swords to Plowshares
The San Diego LGBT Community Center
The TransLatin@ Coalition
TransCanWork

Transgender Military Hub
Viet Rainbow of Orange County

REGISTERED OPPOSITION:

None on file

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