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Health and Government Operations
Committee

Chair, St. Mary's County Delegation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

The Honorable Delegate Shane Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
241 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: HB 540- Interstate Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact
SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Pendergrass and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present **HB 540- Interstate Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact**

This bill establishes an interstate licensure compact for occupational therapists. This means that occupational therapists can work across state lines, just as long as they are licensed by a member state of the compact.

The Maryland General Assembly has already enacted similar legislation for nurses, physicians, and physical therapists.

Why it's needed:

This legislation is imperative to greater access to care for our citizens. I have heard from both constituents and providers of the need for greater access to health care services across the board. Occupational therapy services are particularly important because these services allow some of our most vulnerable constituents to live more independently. We need to ensure that older adults, children with special needs, and individuals recovering from injuries have the support that they need.

The need is especially great in rural areas like my own district, St. Mary's County and many other rural, more remote areas of our state.

Our hospitals, schools, long-term care facilities, and community providers need more flexibility in recruiting qualified health care providers to provide both in-person and telehealth services. Licensure compacts offer an important pathway to ensuring our health care facilities and providers have a sufficient number of qualified providers.

The covid-19 pandemic has accentuated the real importance of innovative ways to provide healthcare, such as telehealth. This legislation will create an avenue for telehealth providers to "cross State lines"

and provide services virtually. A compact will facilitate the use of telehealth, helping to overcome the disparate rules of each state.

Conclusion:

The Compact will go into effect when 10 states have enacted the compact bills. And close to 15 states have introduced it already. These states include Virginia and Delaware, as well as legislation introduced in Pennsylvania. We could have a truly regional approach in the near future.

There is broad support for the bill with the Maryland Occupational Therapy Association, the Board of Occupational Therapy Practice, and the Maryland Hospital Association. **There is no opposition to the bill.**

I ask the Committee to give HB 540 a **FAVORABLE** report.

Sincerely,



Matt Morgan
Delegate