



DATE: February 24, 2021 **COMMITTEE:** House Health and Government Operations
BILL NO: House Bill 540
BILL TITLE: Interstate Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports House Bill 540 - Interstate Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact

Bill Summary:

House Bill 540 creates an interstate occupational therapy licensure compact, to be enacted when nine other states have also passed legislation substantially similar to this Act.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger's services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based and community-based programs.

Occupational Therapy Services: Kennedy Krieger provides approximately 22,000 Occupational Therapy appointments to 25,000 families per year, of whom a fifth are residents of a state other than Maryland.

Out of State Services: Kennedy Krieger Institute provides specialized services to patients nationally and internationally. In pre-pandemic times, families would need to make arrangements to complete the potentially costly and time consuming trip to Kennedy Krieger Institute to obtain the skilled services their child and/or family required. In our current and uncertain time with Covid-19, the Telehealth service delivery model enables our providers to see patients from 44 of the 50 states in 2020 but barriers with licensure and regulations can cause significant delays and sometimes, an inability to provide the specialized care. With the complete services offered both at Kennedy Krieger Institute locations, in our community, and in the homes of our patients and their families combined with our geographic proximity to numerous surrounding states, there has been and will continue to be extreme struggles in providing care in the absence of an interstate compact.

Rationale:

An interstate compact will allow a formal and legal relationship amongst states that promote a common agenda, to improve the health, wellbeing, and lives of the patients and families that we serve so they can live their lives to the fullest. An interstate compact will allow families across participating states to have access to the highest quality of occupational therapy services and providers available while also decreasing the burdens placed on the patient, family, and the system. In addition to improving public access to occupational therapy services, the interstate compact would increase collaboration and research initiatives that will promote improved training and education for current and future practitioners, larger data pools and studies to guide regional and potentially national policy, and improve patient outcomes. Though the need for an interstate compact has existed for many years, the Covid-19 pandemic has pushed this need to the forefront. Telehealth allows increased access to quality care with a potential that cannot be fully realized with the current absence of an interstate licensure compact. As states begin to modify their telehealth waivers and remove their expedited licensure policies put into place due to the pandemic, access to care and continuity of care will be restricted and as a result, the full potential of those who need specialized services will not be realized.

In its early stages, the interstate compact for occupational therapy has already received significant support including letters from 12 state board expressing their commitment to participate, including Virginia and the District of Columbia.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on House Bill 540.