

TO: The Honorable Joselyn Pena-Melnyk, Chair Members, House
Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Ken Kerr

FROM: Samantha Barrett, LCSW-C

DATE: February 1, 2024

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 34 - Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact

Dear Chairperson Pena-Melnyk and Distinguished Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

Thank you for considering my written statement supporting House Bill 34 on the "Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact" for inclusion in the public hearing record. I am Samantha Barrett, a Licensed Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C) who resides in West Virginia but is currently employed in Washington County, Maryland.

The significance of the Social Work Interstate Licensure Compact impacts my work directly due to living and working in different states. The unique location of the State of Maryland and the access to clinicians in the surrounding area will help to bridge the gap between the demand for mental health services and the limited number of licensed providers available to deliver ethical and safe care. The education and training received at accredited institutions by Social Workers and mandatory continued education post-licensure prove the high standard of care that Social Workers can provide. As a practitioner living in the State of West Virginia and practicing in Maryland, I have seen firsthand how the licensure compact will greatly expand services, reduce waitlists, and pave the way for high quality mental health services for those in need.

The Social Work Compact brings numerous benefits, impacting those needing critical mental health support and Social Workers. It achieves this by:

1. Facilitating mobility for Social Workers meeting uniform licensure requirements allowing them to serve clients with less barriers.
2. Expanding access to care for clients.
3. Ensuring continuity of care for clients and Social Workers during relocations or travel across state lines.
4. Simplifying the maintenance of certifications for military personnel and their spouses during relocations.

Notably, the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact preserves each state's authority to regulate the profession. It does not alter the scope of practice or affect state practice laws. Social Workers operating under the Compact must adhere to the laws and rules of the state where they practice, including compliance with the state's scope of practice.

The State of Maryland clearly recognizes the need for expansion of mental health services, and I view the interstate compact as a first step in achieving this goal. I urge you to lend your support to the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact, recognizing its potential to make a transformative impact on mental health service accessibility and continuity of care. I appreciate your consideration in helping to propel my profession forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samantha Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'S'.

Samantha Barrett, LCSW-C