

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

FROM: Lynn Panepinto, LCSW-C

DATE: February 1, 2024

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

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

I sincerely 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 Lynn Panepinto, a Licensed Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C) residing and practicing in Baltimore City County, Maryland.

I began my social work career in Texas, where I attended graduate school and earned my clinical license. Upon moving to Maryland two and a half years ago, I underwent the LCSW-C by endorsement process to have my license recognized in Maryland. It took several months, paperwork, and fees, and in the meantime, I was passed over for a few positions requiring a valid Maryland social work license. However, I eventually was granted my LCSW-C and have been practicing in Maryland since then.

Because of the different continuing education requirements and the multiple licensing and renewal fees that I would have to pay to maintain two licenses, I set my Texas LCSW license to inactive. This was a great disappointment to me and something that I had hoped to avoid. As a bilingual (Spanish-speaking) social worker who specializes in immigration, it is very important for me to remain connected to colleagues and clients in different parts of the United States. I found that, coming from Texas, my skillset related to immigration was in high demand in Maryland, and the ability to practice concurrently in both states would have allowed me more opportunities to keep my pulse on important immigration work. That being said, I think an interstate social work compact is long overdue and would greatly benefit our profession.

The ability to practice across state lines is pivotal in addressing disparities in access to culturally competent mental and behavioral health services. Doing so can alleviate inequities related to socioeconomic status, (dis)ability status, gender diversity, sexuality, and other barriers that impede individuals from receiving adequate care. Clearing barriers holds particular importance in advocating for marginalized communities, ensuring they receive treatment and support, especially when in-person appointments may be challenging or finding a suitable clinician becomes a hurdle, such as during a pandemic.

I strongly 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.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,



Lynn Panepinto  
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