

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

FROM: Charity Mitchell, LMSW, CTP

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:

I want to express my gratitude for considering my written support for House Bill 34, which focuses on the "Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact," for inclusion in the public hearing record. I am Charity Mitchell, a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) practicing in Frederick County, Maryland.

The importance of the Social Work Interstate Licensure Compact holds personal significance for me due to the significant gap between the demand for mental health services and the limited number of licensed providers available. The rigorous education and training received by mental health professionals, regardless of state, along with mandatory post-licensure education, highlight our commitment to maintaining high standards in the field.

Practicing across state lines is essential to address disparities in access to culturally competent mental and behavioral health services. This approach can reduce inequalities related to socioeconomic status, (dis)ability status, gender diversity, sexuality, and other barriers preventing individuals from receiving adequate care. Removing such barriers is especially crucial for marginalized communities, ensuring they receive treatment and support, especially during challenging times like a pandemic.

Taking inspiration from existing licensure compacts for healthcare professions, the Social Work Compact enhances licensure portability and empowers state regulatory boards to protect consumers by facilitating the seamless sharing of licensure information.

The Social Work Compact provides various benefits, impacting those in need of critical mental health support and social workers alike by:

1. Facilitating mobility for social workers meeting uniform licensure requirements.
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.

5. Safeguarding and strengthening the existing system of state licensure.

Crucially, the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact preserves each state's authority to regulate the profession without altering the scope of practice or affecting 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.

I strongly urge you to support the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact, recognizing its potential to significantly impact mental health service accessibility and continuity of care.

I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Charity Mitchell*

Charity Mitchell  
License Master Social Worker (LMSW)  
Frederick County, Maryland