



National Center for Interstate Compacts

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

CSG Testimony on HB34 – Social Work Licensure Compact

House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 1st, 2024

Kaitlyn Bison, The Council of State Governments. kbison@csq.org

Chair Pena-Melnyk and members of the committee, I would like to express my appreciation for your consideration of the Social Work Licensure Compact. My name is Kaitlyn Bison with The Council of State Governments. My written testimony is meant to provide background educational information on the compact.

The Council of State Governments is a nonpartisan membership association for elected and appointed state government officials from all three branches. CSG, through its National Center for Interstate Compacts, has facilitated the development process for all sixteen of the active occupational licensing compacts, including the seven that Maryland is a member of (ASLP, counseling, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychology, and medicine). Maryland is also a member of 50 other interstate compacts unrelated to professional licensing.

There are approximately 500,000 licensed social workers in the United States. Despite the high demand for social work services, licensees are currently limited to providing services within state borders. The Social Work Licensure Compact seeks to provide licensees with opportunities for multistate practice, support relocating practitioners, and foster workforce development by reducing unnecessary licensure burdens.

The compact was created through a cooperative agreement between the Department of Defense and The Council of State Governments. For 18 months, CSG developed the compact language with stakeholders within the profession from the Association of Social Work Boards, National Association of Social Workers, Clinical Social Work Association, social work regulatory boards, the social work education community, and others. The compact language was finalized in February 2023.

The Compact will enable social workers to obtain a multistate license issued by their home state to practice in other states that join the compact, rather than get an individual license in every state in which they want to practice. Like the compact for a driver's license, each compact member state agrees to mutually recognize the practitioner licenses issued by every other member state.

The Social Work Licensure Compact is similar in form and function to the seven other occupational licensing compacts that Maryland is already a member of. A social worker



must hold an active, unencumbered license in their home state to be eligible for a multistate license. Licensees must also pass a background check and meet other eligibility requirements related to education and examinations.

From a regulatory perspective, the Compact preserves the authority of each compact member state to protect public health and safety through the existing state regulatory structure. A licensee practicing under a multistate license must abide by the laws, regulations and rules that govern the practice of social work in the state in which they are located. The Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners has jurisdiction over anyone practicing in Maryland under a multistate license.

The Social Work Licensure Compact also benefits military families. If a military family gets assigned to a new duty station in a compact member state, the service member or their spouse can continue to work with their current multistate license.

Like all of the other occupational licensing compacts, the Social Work Licensure Compact will be governed by a commission made up of the member states. The delegate will be a representative from the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners.

The compact will come into effect once it's enacted by seven states. There is currently only one member state (Missouri). However, many states have introduced the bill since the start of 2024. If enacted in Maryland, Maryland would have a seat at the table when the compact commission has its first meeting to establish the compact's rules and bylaws.

Overall, the Social Work Licensure Compact will increase license portability for social work professionals in Maryland, support military families, and improve access to social work services for Maryland residents, while maintaining the current system of state licensure. Additionally, by ensuring the sharing of investigative and disciplinary information among participating states, the Social Work Licensure Compact will allow participating state regulatory entities to better protect the public. I understand that increasing access to mental health providers is a key issue facing states, and we believe the compact provides one solution that helps alleviate that problem.