



Committee: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Bill Number: Senate Bill 571

Title: Interstate Licensed Professional Counselors Compact

Hearing Date: February 16, 2021

Position: Support

The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) supports *Senate Bill 571 – Interstate Licensed Professional Counselors Compact*. This bill would enter Maryland into the Interstate Licensed Professional Counselors Compact, which was developed by a National Portability Taskforce comprised of various stakeholders including the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA).

What the Compact Does

The Interstate Licensed Professional Counselors Compact will become effective once 10 states pass identical legislation. Once this occurs, licensed clinical professional counselors in Maryland will be able to work in states which have entered into the compact. Currently, professional counselors are required to obtain separate licensure in each state they want to practice in.

Clinical professional counselors licensed in Maryland would still be required to meet all licensure requirements set out by the Maryland Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists. In addition, individuals licensed in other states would be subject to Maryland's laws and regulations when providing services in Maryland through the compact. This includes the Board's requirement that all in-state and out-of-state applicants complete the Maryland Law Assessment to determine if applicants are familiar with Maryland's laws and ethical code related to safe and effective practice across several content areas.

Benefits of the Compact

Increased Access to Care through Telehealth: Even prior to the current health care pandemic, Marylanders across the state experienced difficulties accessing behavioral health services. We have seen over the past year the importance that telehealth in meeting the demand for behavioral health services, at a time when we know that there are not enough behavioral health providers overall. The inclusion of a telehealth section in the compact highlights the importance of telehealth across state

lines, while ensuring professional counselors abide by the rules of their home state and the state in which their client is located.

Improved Continuity of Care: One of the major benefits of establishing a compact in Maryland is allowing consumers to access their provider when the provider resides or relocates to another state. As each state has its own unique rules regarding reciprocity, delays in obtaining licensure are commonplace when moving from one state to another. Compacts have the benefit of ensuring that individuals will be able to more readily begin providing services when relocating, while still meeting an agreed upon set of education and training standards. This not only benefits professional counselors, it also benefits employers, which often recruit out-of-state providers in order to meet workforce shortages.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any further information, please contact Rachael faulkner at rfaulkner@policypartners.net or 410-693-4000.