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February 16, 2021

The Honorable Senator Paul Pinsky, Chairperson
EHEA Committee
Maryland Senate
11 Bladen Street
Room 2, West Wing
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: **SUPPORT FOR SB 571** - Interstate Licensed Professional Counselors Compact

Dear Chairperson Pinsky and Distinguished Members of the Senate Committee on Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs:

I want to thank you for taking my written statement of support for SB 571 on the "Counseling Compact" to be entered into the public hearing record. My name is Ellen Dumer, LCPC and I am a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor who resides and practices in Harford County, Maryland.

This Compact is important to me because is important to me and to my clients as it provides easier access to services. This is especially true for clients who are elderly, disabled, without transportation, and those who have work or home responsibilities that impact their ability to take time out of their schedule for transportation to an appointment. It is widely known that mental health services have been limited by many factors over the past year, with COVID being the most frequent reason for increased anxiety and depression across all demographics. My inquiries from new clients for telehealth has increased significantly. The location of my practice is a factor as clients from neighboring states who would otherwise be able to travel prefer not to have in-person visits.

Much like existing licensure compacts for nurses, physical therapists, physicians, psychologists and EMS personnel, the Counseling Compact will increase licensure portability for practitioners while allowing state regulatory boards to better protect consumers through enhanced sharing of licensure information.

The Counseling Compact will benefit those in need of critical lifesaving mental health support and counselors by:

- Enhancing mobility for counselors who meet uniform licensure requirements;
- Increasing access to care for clients;
- Ensuring continuity of care when clients or counselors relocate or travel to other states;
- Allowing military personnel and spouses to easily maintain certifications when relocating;
- Preserving and strengthening the current system of state licensure.

The Counseling Compact preserves each state's authority to regulate the profession. It does not alter scope of practice or impact state practice law. Counselors utilizing the Compact must abide by the laws and rules of the state in which they are practicing, including adhering to that state's scope of practice.

I strongly urge you to support this Counseling Compact.

Sincerely,