

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 Roni K. White and I am a licensed professional counselor who resides and practices in Montgomery County, Maryland.

This Compact is important to me for professional equity and professional serviceability. Instituting a Counseling Compact assists states to achieve alignment in credentialing standards which will have a positive impact on accredited graduate degree programs across the nation, which will equip new professionals with the ability to apply for licensure and serve in a state in need. For established licensed counselors the Counseling Compact creates opportunity to provide ethical services across state lines to those in need. It is difficult for many clients to terminate mental health services due to relocation or job placements, the Counseling Compact can provide an option for continuity of care. I have received inquiry calls to my business seeking services as the caller could not find a licensed therapist in their area or a licensed counselor meeting their preferences in their area. It is incredibly challenging to turn away people in need due to a state line barrier. As SAMHSA, many organizations, and mental health professionals across the nation are actively working to dismantle the stigma on therapy to encourage those suffering to receive help, we need to remove barriers and increase access to ensure help is available when sought.

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roni K. White". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "R" and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

Roni K. White, NCC, LCPC
Psychotherapist
Apricity Wellness Counseling
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