

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 Sharon McClurkin, and I am a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) who resides and practices in Frederick County, Maryland.

This Compact is important to me because Frederick County borders Pennsylvania and West Virginia and Virginia with Interstate 270 and US Route 15 intersecting the County bringing hundreds of people every day from those bordering states to work in Frederick County and surrounding areas. They don’t understand why I can’t provide therapeutic services for them during their lunch time or immediately after work, both times when it is most convenient for them to receive services. Providing needed services for them does not take away from the ability to provide needed services for those who live in Maryland. It’s about receiving services when it’s convenient, where it’s convenient, and with whom they’re most comfortable. Also, Frederick is home to Hood College, a private higher education institution, whose 2019 Profile states their undergraduate students were from 26 States and Washington, DC. As soon as any of those students return to their home State or DC for any break, we are no longer able to provide their needed services. None of this makes sense. Telehealth is an invaluable tool that has no barriers except those we impose. Removing barriers provides exactly the Continuity of Care we Professional Counselors are Ethically and Morally mandated and expected to provide.

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 black ink that reads "Sharon A. McClurkin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

Sharon A. McClurkin, LCPC  
Master of Science from Loyola University Maryland  
Owner of Salt and Light Counseling LLC, a private group practice in Frederick, MD  
Home address is 8003 Captains Ct., Frederick MD 21701