

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 Sara Pula and I am a Counselor Educator and Clinical Mental Health Counselor who resides and practices in Anne Arundel County, Maryland.

This Compact is important to me because increased access to counseling services across state lines is critical, particularly in an area such as ours that borders other jurisdictions such as Virginia, DC, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Counselors residing in Maryland often have clients who move to one of these local areas and due to current licensure regulations must find a new counselor and start the process over, even if they’ve been working with a counselor for some time and making great progress. I can’t tell you how disruptive and harmful this is to the well-being of our clients. The Counseling Compact would allow counselors to more easily serve clients as they relocate or move back and forth across state lines (e.g., Federal workers, college students, etc).

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,

Sara Pula, PhD, LCPC ACS  
President-Elect, Maryland Counseling Association  
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