

February 18, 2021

The Honorable Del. Shane Pendergrass, Chairperson
Health and Government Operations
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen St. RM 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: **SUPPORT FOR HB 736** – Interstate Licensed Professional Counselors Compact

Dear Chairperson Pendergrass and Distinguished Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

I want to thank you for taking my written statement of support for HB 736 on the “Counseling Compact” to be entered into the public hearing record. My name is Elizabeth Gil and I am a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor who resides in Montgomery County, and practices in Anne Arundel County, Maryland.

This Compact is important to me because I have had long term clients who have moved and who, after ending counseling with me due to their move out of state, wrote to me expressing challenges finding a new counselor. I have seen the difference that telebehavioral health has made for so many in increasing access to services with regards to commute times, finding more professionals to connect with, and how telehealth has helped so many during the pandemic. I find that if we were able to work across state lines more frequently, we would be able to offer services to more clients and help more people, more consistently, and decrease long-term effects of behavioral health conditions which contribute to long-term chronic physical illness. We could provide people with the emotional and behavioral support that they need in times of stress. Moreover, counselors would have an easier time moving to different states without having lapses in needed to re-apply for licensure with such high costs which impedes our abilities to assist our own families.

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 "E Gil LCPC". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "E" and "G".

Elizabeth Gil
MA, LCPC, NCC