



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND  
PRINCE GEORGE'S  
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February 11, 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 Donna Melynda Clarke and I am a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) who resides and practices in Prince George’s County, Maryland.

This Compact is important to the work I do as a therapist and as the Program Administrator for the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Center at UM PGHC. We provide trauma informed therapy that relies on the ability to build strong therapeutic relationships, and avoiding unnecessary referrals to alternative practices. During COVID19, our clients relied on telebehavioral health modalities. However, since they often seek to relocate to other jurisdictions to escape abusers, we are prevented from continuing our services with them. The inability to practice across state lines prohibits us from meeting their goals of promoting safety and self-sufficiency, and can even lead to them returning to their abusers.

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 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 cursive script, reading "Donna Melynda Clarke". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Dr. Donna Melynda Clarke, LCPC, MS, MPA, NCC  
Program Administrator, Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Center