

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

My physical office is located 5 blocks from Hood College, a private higher education institution founded in 1893, whose 2019 Profile states their undergraduates were from 26 States and Washington, DC; and my group private practice must suspend services to these students as soon as they return to their home States or DC simply because they are not at that moment physically in Maryland and even though telehealth is completely available to them. Also, hundreds of people who work in Frederick County live in the neighboring states of West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Virginia; and my group practice is unable to provide any services to them simply because they reside in a different state, even though the most convenient time for them to receive services is during their lunch break or immediately after work. These situations break my heart and force my group to turn people away for services for arbitrary reasons. With telehealth, we ought to be able to provide services to pretty much anyone anywhere, thus increasing access to services to everyone. At the very least, telehealth gives us the opportunity to provide continuing services and continuity of care when people spend part of their time in Maryland and part of their time elsewhere. And these are a few of the many reasons why this Compact is important to me.

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 flourish at the end.

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