

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 Kshipra Jain and I am a Licensed Professional Counselor who resides and practices in Washington, DC.

This Compact is important to me because there is a huge gap between the need for mental health services and the number of licensed providers who are able to serve clients in an ethical and safe manner. The education and training that we receive as mental health professionals is vigorous, regardless of state, as is the number of hours that we are required to put into continued education post-licensure. As such, the ability to practice across statelines will significantly allow for the reduction of inequities in terms of access to culturally competent mental and behavioral health services, based on socioeconomic status, (dis)ability status, gender diversity and sexuality, and other barriers to receiving adequate care. This is an important step in advocating for marginalized communities, who need treatment and support, yet may not be able to safely make it to in-person appointments, or find a well-suited clinician who specializes in the care they need, during a pandemic or otherwise.

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,



Kshipra Jain, LPC, NCC
Therapist & Clinical Supervisor
2480 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20009