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Please support: SB 439: Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Compact

February 28, 2022

Dear Finance Committee members,

I am a licensed as a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner and own a private practice, Harborside Behavioral Health, LLC in Leonardtown, Maryland. I provide care in a federally identified health care provider shortage area for both primary care and mental health. I support the passing SB 439 for license portability to improve health outcomes for patients and address health care workforce needs.

This is about a choice. The Compact affords any APRN the choice to have a multistate license. In fact, 94% of Maryland APRNs who responded to a Maryland Board of Nursing survey are in favor of adopting the APRN Compact. This is a voluntary license. APRNs who don't want or need a multistate license do not have to obtain one.

This compact is about access to opportunity with fewer barriers and burdens. The compact allows APRNs the ability to practice in other states minimizing financial, administrative, bureaucratic burden of waiting months to be licensed. Currently, these barriers and burdens contribute to lost wages and missed employment opportunities. Participating in the APRN Compact saves APRNs the high cost of being licensed in multiple states. My community is home to a military base, Naval Air Station Patuxent River. The APRN Compact supports military spouses moving to Maryland seeking employment as APRNs. Currently, obtaining licensure in Maryland can take up to 6 months of their 2-year tour of duty here.

Maryland was the pioneer in enacting the Nurse Licensure Compact in 1999. We need to keep Maryland as the leaders in the Nursing Profession by passing this Compact. Multistate licensure compacts save boards of nursing time and money by ensuring uniform licensure state to state. Currently, three states have adopted the Compact, and six more have introduced legislation in 2023 to adopt the Compact.

This is about access to APRN care. Maryland residents in my community can wait months to get an appointment for specialist care—particularly in psychiatry. In my community, the VA clinic publishes its wait times on its website. As of February 25, 2023, a new patient psychiatric evaluation appointment is a 103 day wait! A compact could improve health outcomes for patients. With the current healthcare workforce shortage facing many Maryland communities, the APRN Compact ensures greater access to care particularly in rural and underserved communities where the workforce shortages are most critical.

This is about what is best for the patient. Telehealth has become a mainstay of our healthcare system since the Covid epidemic. APRNs needs licenses in each state where their patients are or reside to provide Telehealth services. The APRN Compact would eliminate the need for multiple licenses. Currently, I am contracted to offer Psychiatric services at St. Mary's College of Maryland. During COVID, the college went virtual, as did my services for the students—except the students who were out of state. The out of state students were unable to continue utilizing this free college-based service. These are not unique or rare situations for patients and these situations contribute to an ever-growing inequity in health care delivery.

This is a choice for an APRN. You know who else wants a choice? The citizens of the State of Maryland want the choice to access APRN care, they want to choose HOW they access APRN care, and they want the choice to continue their APRN care and this legislation allows for patients to have that choice. This is about looking at the greater good for the citizens of the State of Maryland to improve health outcomes and address licensure portability issues. I urge you to support SB 439 for APRN compact licensure.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sabrina Sepulveda CRNP-PMH". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sabrina Sepulveda, CRNP-PMH/ Owner, Harborside Behavioral Health, LLC