

TO: The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Joanne C. Benson

FROM: Jennifer Atwell

DATE: February 13, 2024

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 204 - Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact

Dear Madam Chair Beidle and Distinguished Members of the Finance Committee:

My name is Jennifer Atwell and I am a clinical social worker who resides in your district.

I am writing in support of the Social Work Licensure Compact. It would allow for continuity of care when high school students, who have been in therapy, enroll in an out-of-state college.

I often work with teens transitioning from high school to college. I encourage my clients to connect with their colleges' counseling centers when they go to an out-of-state school to maintain their mental health. Many college counseling centers have a limit on the amount of sessions students can have per semester. They are also more oriented to handling crises and not ongoing therapy. When a student needs ongoing therapy, college counseling centers refer them to an outpatient provider in their area. The student then has to establish a therapeutic relationship and start from the beginning with the new provider rather than following up with a therapist that already knows their history. This has led some students to return home before their semester ends due to mental health deterioration.

During peak COVID, I observed the benefit of continuing care with a student who left for college in Pennsylvania. Due to the temporary waiver, I was able to provide treatment during her adjustment period and she successfully completed her first year in an out-of-state school while navigating sources of stress such as workload, roommates, missing home, and increasing independence while being supported by a therapist who was already familiar with her areas of difficulty and could support the use of therapeutic strategies that had been utilized in the past. I believe the option of continuing with their current therapist, even if they choose an out of state school, may lead to more college students having successful transitions during their first year away from home.

I encourage you to vote in support of the Social Work Licensure Compact.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Atwell, LCSW-C

2036 Sumner Drive

Frederick, MD 21702