



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists

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2024 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL No.: SB 221
COMMITTEE: FINANCE
POSITION: SWA

TITLE: Health Occupations Boards - Reciprocal Licensure and Certification

BILL ANALYSIS: This bill gives statutory authority to enter into reciprocity agreements with other states to license/certify individuals under reciprocity providing they meet the requirements for licensure/certification.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: The Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists (the “Board”) supports SB 221 with amendment.

In order to enter into a reciprocal agreement with another state/jurisdiction, a health occupations board must first have the statutory authority to do so. Health occupations reciprocity refers to the process of obtaining a license to practice in a new state without going through the initial license application process and thereby reducing barriers to interstate mobility for licensed professionals.

This Board initiated the concept of reciprocity for its licensees to increase the portability of the licenses of professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, alcohol and drug counselors, and art therapists. It addresses the workforce crisis in Maryland by increasing access to licensed/certified individuals, thus giving Maryland residents greater choice of treatment providers and treatment modalities. Additionally, it will enhance accessibility and continuity of service by including the use of teletherapy. SB 221 will also provide these same benefits for other health occupations seeking a reciprocity option.

A reciprocal agreement will not take the place of an interstate compact, which several health occupations boards have. In fact, it is more complementary than a replacement. Compacts allow portability exclusively between compact states, while reciprocity can be agreed to on a potentially larger scale.

The Board requests the following amendments:

Amendment 1

Page 1, line 21, following "...ANOTHER STATE" strike "OR"; line 22, strike "JURISDICTION"

Amendment 2

Page 2, line 3, following "...ANOTHER STATE" strike "OR"; line 4, strike "JURISDICTION"

Amendment 3

Page 2, line 8, strike "OR JURISDICTION"

Thank you for considering this testimony. The Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists is requesting a favorable report on SB 221. If you require and additional information, please contact the Board's Legislation/Regulations Committee Chair, Karen Katrinic at karen.katrinic@maryland.gov or call 410-533-1991; or contact the Board's Legislative Liaison, Lillian Reese at lillian.reese@maryland.gov or call 443-794-4757.

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.