



2024 SESSION
POSITION PAPER

BILL NO: SB 204

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee

POSITION: Support

TITLE: Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact

BILL ANALYSIS

SB 204 - Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact if passed enters Maryland into the Social Work Licensure Compact (or compact). The proposed legislation establishes specified procedures and requirements for a social worker to practice under a multistate license in a member state; the composition, powers, and responsibilities of the Social Work Licensure Compact Commission; and requirements related to oversight, dispute resolution, and enforcement of the compact. The bill is contingent on substantially similar legislation being enacted in five other states.¹

POSITION AND RATIONALE

The Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) supports SB 204. The bill would increase access to social workers and in particular, specialized care that may not be locally available. Implementation of the compact across member states aims to expedite licensure processes for social workers in obtaining a multistate license to practice across state lines. Use of compacts help preserve the patient-provider relationship and enhance workforce capacity, contributing to the resilience of health care systems, especially during a public health emergency (PHE), such as a pandemic or natural disaster.² The legislative proposal will promote workforce mobility and

¹ Seven states must enact the Model Social Work Compact Bill before the Compact Commission is established. Missouri and South Dakota are the only states to enact legislation; Maryland is among 24 states that have pending legislation. More information is available at: swcompact.org/compact-map/.

² Milbank Memorial Fund, *Can Interstate Licensure Compacts Enhance the Health Care Workforce?*, April 2023. Available at: www.milbank.org/2023/04/can-interstate-licensure-compacts-enhance-the-health-care-workforce/.

enable qualified social workers to treat and maintain continuity of care for patients in compact member states. This is especially crucial for more vulnerable populations with conditions requiring ongoing treatment and care coordination.

The legislation aligns with the findings and recommendations from MHCC's September 2023, *Interstate Telehealth Expansion Study* report (report).³ The MHCC conducted a study in collaboration with stakeholders at the request of the Health and Government Operations (HGO) Committee. In a letter dated May 24, 2022, the HGO Chair noted support for the expanded use of telehealth since the COVID-19 PHE, and tasked MHCC with convening a workgroup to inform development of recommendations to expand interstate telehealth. The MHCC convened workgroup (January – March 2023) discussed barriers and opportunities to expanding the delivery of telehealth services across state lines. The workgroup consisted of representatives from health occupation boards, providers, payers, health care consumers, professional associations, professional liability insurance carriers, and various State agencies.

The MHCC's report includes nine recommendations for advancing interstate telehealth practice, which includes adopting legislation to advance participation in compacts. The workgroup viewed compacts as important to help alleviate workforce supply challenges that result in longer wait times and impede access to care. Workgroup participants generally favor compacts with a mutual recognition model⁴ where providers maintain a license in their home state and apply for a multistate license or privilege (authorization) to practice in other compact states.⁵

The MHCC believes this legislation is an important next step to improve access to care and health equity for underserved and vulnerable populations. If passed by the General Assembly, the law will expand cooperation among states licensure boards, enable greater use of telehealth, and enhance public safety.

For the stated reasons above, we ask for a favorable report on SB 204.

³ Maryland Health Care Commission, *Interstate Telehealth Expansion Study*, September 2023. Available at: mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/pages/home/workgroups/documents/ist/IST_HGO_rpt.pdf.

⁴ Under a mutual recognition model, a licensee receives a multistate license from the compact state in which the licensee has established residence or purchases a privilege from the compact.

⁵ JDSupra, *Developments in Interstate Telehealth Licensing*, December 2022. Available at: www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/developments-in-interstate-telehealth-3935324/.

