

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

FROM: Starling Butler Hathcock, LCSW-C  
YOUUnique Counseling

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:

Thank you for considering my verbal testimony supporting Senate Bill 204 I am Starling Hathcock, a Licensed Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C) residing and practicing in Frederick County, Maryland and the wife of a Navy Veteran.

Today, I invite you to peer into the life of individuals whose paths have intertwined with mine throughout my career.

Meet Jordan, a high school graduate from Maryland. Eager yet apprehensive about starting college in a distant state, away from the support of family and friends. As Jordan dives into college life, they face academic pressures, relationship challenges, and the complexities of adjusting to a new environment. Unfortunately, these stressors trigger a resurgence of symptoms. Seeking help, Jordan contacts me. However, they learn that I cannot provide telehealth services across state lines due to the lack of an interstate compact. Consequently, Jordan must begin anew, rebuilding rapport and trust with a different therapist.

Meet Jami. Jami has endured years of intimate partner violence. After summoning the courage to leave their abusive relationship and relocate from Maryland, Jami encounters a distressing revelation: they won't be able to maintain their therapy sessions with me through telehealth if they move. This news sends Jami into a tailspin of emotions, grappling with the difficult decision. Ultimately, Jami chooses to remain in Maryland, where they receive support, albeit enduring ongoing abuse.

Jordan and Jami's plight underscores the urgent necessity for the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact in Maryland. With this legislation firmly established, each could seamlessly continue their therapy sessions with trusted therapist via telehealth, ensuring a smoother transition into college life and fostering improved mental health outcomes during this pivotal juncture in life.

Maryland has the unique opportunity to improve access to mental health care by enacting the Social Work Interstate Compact. By breaking down barriers for vulnerable populations and leveraging telehealth, we can address the mental health crisis plaguing our nation while boosting Maryland's economy. Let's take decisive action and make Maryland a trailblazer in mental health care reform.

I appreciate your favorable consideration for SB 204.

Sincerely,  
Starling Hathcock  
Licensed Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C)  
Frederick County, Maryland