

Senate Finance Committee

January 28, 2025

Senate Bill 174

Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact

*****SUPPORT*****

To the Honorable Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the National Association of Social Workers Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) to express our strong support for Senate Bill 174, the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact. As the largest membership organization of professional social workers, NASW is committed to enhancing the professional growth of its members and advancing social policies that improve the well-being of individuals and communities. This compact, sponsored by Senator Benson, offers significant benefits for social workers and the individuals and families they serve across Maryland and beyond.

The Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact represents a critical step toward improving the mobility of social workers and expanding access to much-needed services. By allowing licensed social workers to practice in any member state, this compact eliminates unnecessary barriers, streamlines licensure processes, and ensures that services are available across state lines. This is particularly important for clients who relocate or travel frequently, such as military families, as well as individuals in underserved areas who may have limited access to qualified professionals.

Key Benefits of the Social Work Licensure Compact:

- **Enhances Social Worker Mobility:** Social workers can practice in any participating state, reducing the need for multiple state licenses and allowing professionals to serve clients without barriers.
- **Improves access to services:** The compact addresses workforce shortages by expanding the availability of qualified social workers, ensuring that individuals across participating states have access to the care they need.
- **Supports relocating military spouses:** Military families will benefit from quicker licensure recognition for social workers who are spouses of service members, minimizing delays in employment and client service.

(over)

- Ensures continuity of care: Clients who move or travel between states will continue to receive uninterrupted care, improving overall outcomes for individuals with long-term needs.
- Strengthens public safety: The compact maintains rigorous standards for licensure and establishes a national data system to track licensed professionals, ensuring public protection through transparency and accountability.
- Improves efficiency and reduces delays: By eliminating duplicative licensing processes, the compact reduces the time and costs associated with multiple licensure applications, ensuring quicker access to social work services.
- Encourages professional development: The compact provides opportunities for social workers to expand their professional expertise by practicing in multiple states and gaining exposure to diverse social work settings and practices.
- Encourages professionals to return to social work: The compact provides an incentive for individuals who have left the social work profession, particularly those who transitioned to counseling, to return to social work. With a similar compact in place for counseling, this streamlined licensure process across state lines creates an attractive opportunity for these professionals to re-enter the field and strengthen the workforce.

The NASW Maryland Chapter strongly urges the committee's support for Senate Bill 174. We respectfully ask that you give a favorable report to this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Karessa Proctor, BSW, MSW
Executive Director, NASW-MD