

TO: Maryland General Assembly, Senate Finance Committee
Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair
Senator Antonio Hayes, Vice Chair
CC: Senator Joanne Benson, Bill Sponsor
FROM: Jennifer E. Klingler, LCSW-C
DATE: January 20th 2025

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 174 - Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact

Dear Honorable Chairperson Beidle and Distinguished Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you for considering this written testimony in SUPPORT of SB 174, The Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact.

I have worked in the field of mental health since 1997, graduated with a Master of Social Work degree in 2001 and obtained advanced state licensure in 2003. I have worked in numerous settings including crisis response, outpatient treatment, inpatient hospital treatment and psychiatric research. I am now the owner a small women owned business Providing therapy and case management services in Baltimore, MD

Social workers are a key component of our country's mental health system, which is woefully lacking providers. I trust that the committee members are aware of the many ramifications of the consequences of inadequate access to treatment. The need for more access to professional licensed mental health care providers has never been greater.

The Interstate Compact increases the number of available clinicians, often concentrated in more populated areas, to areas with greater need and fewer clinicians. It would also allow providers to be able to offer their expert care to clients in participating states, where specialized services may not be as accessible.

I have a specialty in helping families affected by serious and persistent mental illness' such as Schizophrenia and Bipolar disorder. With early care and intervention, patient outcomes are improved, there are fewer strains on our hospital and legal systems, and reduced rates of disability. Families often contact me from other states asking for family therapy to help them and their loved one manage these conditions. These services can effectively be provided via telehealth. Location/distance are no longer barriers to obtaining expert care. However, without the Interstate Compact, I cannot provide them with any direct service. And so, families are they are often left with their underfunded and understaffed community mental health centers, few of which are able to provide extensive family therapy with experienced clinicians, if an appointment can be obtained at all.

Thank you, Senator Benson, for sponsoring this important piece of legislation again this year. I am grateful for the committee's consideration of my testimony in support of SB174 and urge you to vote in favor.

Sincerely,



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