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MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

Education, Business and
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson
SB 174 An Act Concerning the “Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact”

Good afternoon, Chair Pamela Beidle, Vice Chair Anthony Hayes, and Esteemed Members of the Committee. I am here today to express my strong support for An Act Concerning the “Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact.”

In recent years, professions have been using interstate compacts to facilitate occupational licensing reciprocity among states. We, the Maryland General Assembly, have passed similar compacts for other health occupations, including nurses, psychologists, licensed professional counselors, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists.

The purpose of this bill is to have Maryland join the 22 other states that in just its first year, joined the multi-state social worker compact.

The Compact’s goals are to:

- eliminate barriers to practice and to client care along with ensuring public protection
- give social workers mobility and support relocating military spouses
- improve access by consumers, and improve continuity of care when clients travel or relocate

Importantly, a compact license gives employers the ability to recruit social workers from other states. This is certainly important when our neighboring states adopt this Compact. Virginia has joined, and Pennsylvania and New Jersey also have legislation pending.

Here in Maryland, a new study shows that we have half of the needed workforce to address current needs related to people seeking help for behavioral health issues. Joining the compact will not solve the whole problem but will help to address it.

States that join the Compact gain an additional layer of oversight of social workers who may enter their state to practice. The data system will allow member states to verify instantaneously that social workers based in other states have met defined standards and competencies and are in good standing with other states’ regulatory boards. The Compact data system will help states better protect the public.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to make Maryland the 23rd state in the nation to join the Social Worker Compact Act by providing a favorable vote.