

TO: The Honorable Joselyn Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
The Honorable Ken Kerr & Jamila Woods

FROM: Charity Mitchell, LCSW-C

DATE: January 23, 2025

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 345 - Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact

Dear Madam Chair, Pena-Melnyk, and Distinguished Members of the House and Government Operations Committee:

Thank you so much for taking the time to consider my written statement in support of House Bill 345, the "Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact," for inclusion in the public hearing record. My name is Charity Mitchell, and I am a Licensed Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C) living and working in Frederick County, Maryland.

The importance of this compact is deeply personal to me. As someone who witnesses the growing demand for mental health services daily, I see firsthand the challenges caused by the shortage of licensed professionals available to provide ethical, compassionate, and high-quality care. Social workers across the country undergo rigorous education, training, and ongoing professional development, ensuring we uphold the highest standards of care—no matter where we practice.

Being able to work across state lines is a crucial step toward bridging the gap in mental and behavioral health care access. This compact has the potential to break down barriers for individuals and families who, for too long, have struggled to find culturally competent care due to socioeconomic challenges, disabilities, gender diversity, or other factors. For marginalized communities in particular, the compact offers hope for improved access to the treatment and support they need, especially during times of crisis, like a pandemic, when in-person care is not always feasible.

The compact builds on the success of similar initiatives for other healthcare professionals—nurses, physical therapists, physicians, psychologists, and counselors. By improving licensure portability for social workers, it not only supports the mobility of practitioners but also strengthens the ability of state regulatory boards to protect clients by facilitating the efficient sharing of licensure information.

Here's how I believe the Social Work Licensure Compact will make a meaningful impact:

1. It will allow social workers who meet uniform requirements to practice seamlessly across state lines.
2. It will improve access to care for clients, particularly those in underserved areas.

3. It will provide continuity of care for clients and social workers who move or travel between states.
4. It will ease the burden on military families, enabling social workers and their spouses to maintain their certifications during relocations.
5. It will strengthen the current state licensure system while safeguarding the authority of each state to regulate the profession.

Importantly, this compact does not alter the scope of practice or state practice laws. Social workers practicing under the compact must still comply with the laws and rules of the state where care is provided, ensuring both accountability and adherence to local standards.

I am deeply passionate about the positive changes this compact could bring—not just for social workers like me but for the many individuals and families who deserve greater access to care. I sincerely urge you to support the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact and help us take a crucial step toward addressing the mental health needs of our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charity Mitchell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned between two horizontal lines that serve as a baseline for the signature.

Charity Mitchell, LCSW-C  
Frederick County, Maryland