

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

From: Kristen McDermott, 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:

I sincerely thank you for considering my written statement supporting House Bill 345 on the "Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact" for inclusion in the public hearing record. I am Kristen McDermott, a Licensed Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C) residing and practicing in Anne Arundel County and Baltimore County, Maryland.

The Social Work Interstate Licensure Compact is so important for people who are in need of continuing their mental health services. In my practice, one of the main reasons I have had to terminate services is due to the client moving out of state. I have had several long-term clients who have made good progress in understanding and managing their mental health symptoms, and still have more work to do, but we have to sever the therapeutic relationship just because they are moving out of state. It is very disruptive to these clients because they are losing this trusted relationship, they are usually in a higher stress circumstances as they go through the uprooting/resettling process, and they will need to go through the difficult process of finding a new therapist. I've had this hard conversation with clients when they announce to me, for better or worse, that they have to move to a different state, and it never gets easier.

Drawing inspiration from existing licensure compacts for various healthcare professions, including nurses, physical therapists, physicians, psychologists, and counselors, the Social Work Compact enhances licensure portability for practitioners. Simultaneously, it empowers state regulatory boards to better protect consumers by facilitating the seamless sharing of licensure information.

The Social Work Compact brings numerous benefits, impacting those needing critical mental health support and social services. It achieves this by:

1. Facilitating mobility for social workers meeting uniform licensure requirements
2. Expanding access to care for clients

3. Ensuring continuity of care for clients and social workers during relocations or travel across state lines.
4. Simplifying the maintenance of certifications for military personnel and their spouses during relocations.
5. Safeguarding and strengthening the existing system of state licensure.

Notably, the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact preserves each state's authority to regulate the profession. It does not alter the scope of practice or affect state practice laws. Social workers operating under the Compact must adhere to the laws and rules of the state where they practice, including compliance with the state's scope of practice.

I greatly urge you to lend your support to the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact, recognizing its' potential to make a transformative impact on mental health service accessibility and continuity of care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristen McDermott, LCSW-C". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kristen McDermott, LCSW-C

Anne Arundel and Baltimore Counties, Maryland