

HB0345_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
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TESTIMONY ON HB#0345 - FAVORABLE
Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact

TO: Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0345, **Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact**

As reported by Maryland Public Radio WYPR, *Maryland facing daunting shortfall of behavioral health workers*.¹ The statistics noted in their story include:

- Maryland is facing a daunting shortfall of nearly 33,000 behavioral health workers over the next few years to keep the state fully staffed and fight off attrition.
- The number comes from a report commissioned by the Maryland Health Care Commission and presented to the state's Medicaid Advisory Board.
- Maryland currently has about 35,000 behavioral health care workers but is short about 18,200 of what is needed to meet that state's needs.
- Over the next few years, about 14,500 of those professionals will retire or leave their job, widening the gap as less people are entering the field.

The intent of this bill is to give Maryland a path that helps close this gap in available social workers for our state. The bill has Maryland entering into the Social Work Licensure Compact for the purpose of authorizing regulated social workers who hold multistate licenses to practice social work in member states in order to improve public access to competent social work services. It protects Maryland by establishing requirements for multistate licensure. This would be accomplished by establishing the Social Work Licensure Compact Commission, providing for withdrawal from the Compact; and providing the Act is contingent on the enactment of substantially similar legislation in six other states.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland quote the Department of Legislative Services 2024 *Issue Papers*: "The mental health needs of adults and children have remained elevated or underserved since the pandemic."² This bill will help Maryland address this issue.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0345.

¹ <https://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2024-12-02/maryland-facing-daunting-shortfall-of-behavioral-health-workers>

² https://www.lwvmd.org/behavioral_health_issue_paper_2024