



January 23, 2025

House Bill 345 - Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact

House Health & Government Operations Committee

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's most vulnerable children who are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. We operate group homes, treatment foster care programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the adoptive and foster care population as well as a juvenile services population.

We are writing in support of House Bill 34. Interstate compacts are powerful and effective tools that foster collaboration, innovation, and resource-sharing among states. By enabling states to work together on common challenges, these compacts transcend geographic boundaries and political differences to address pressing issues efficiently and equitably.

Participating in an interstate compact for social workers, such as the Social Work Licensure Compact, can offer several significant benefits:

1. Facilitates Mobility for Social Workers

- Cross-State Practice: An interstate compact allows licensed social workers to practice in multiple states without needing separate licenses in each state.

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- **Attracts Professionals:** It makes Maryland more attractive to social workers from other states who may want to relocate or offer services here, addressing potential workforce shortages.
2. **Improves Access to Services**
 - **Telehealth Expansion:** Social workers can provide services across state lines via telehealth, increasing access to mental health and social services, especially in underserved or rural areas.
 - **Emergency Response:** Facilitates the deployment of social workers across state lines during crises or disasters without licensure delays.
 3. **Reduces Administrative Burden**
 - **Simplified Licensing Process:** Streamlines the process for social workers moving between states or serving clients in multiple states.
 - **Cost-Effective:** Reduces the cost and time associated with applying for and maintaining licenses in multiple states.
 4. **Enhances Professional Standards**
 - **Consistency Across States:** Promotes uniformity in licensing requirements and standards, ensuring consistent quality of services.
 - **Reciprocity Agreements:** Strengthens collaborative relationships between states by harmonizing professional standards and regulations.
 5. **Supports Workforce Development**
 - **Attracts New Graduates:** Encourages recent social work graduates to remain in or move to Maryland by simplifying licensure for interstate practice.
 - **Professional Growth:** Offers Maryland social workers broader opportunities for employment and professional collaboration.
 6. **Addresses Client Needs**
 - **Continuity of Care:** Ensures clients moving across state lines or residing near borders can maintain consistent access to their social workers.
 - **Broader Reach:** Allows Maryland social workers to serve diverse populations beyond the state's boundaries.

It is also extremely important that Maryland advocates best practices to the Social Work Licensure Compact and governing Commission to ensure that the important efforts put forth by our state – such as the passage of SB871 – Social Workers – Sunset Extension, Notification of Complete Application, and Workgroup on Social Worker Requirements for Licensure. This legislation identified the importance of establishing a workgroup to access next steps in the exam requirements of the field of social work.

These recommendations have been identified and will be reflected in legislation during this General Assembly which will repeal the examination requirements for bachelor and master social worker licenses in tandem with alternative pathway requirements to licensure to address long withstanding racial bias that has been found in the national exam.

Current Compact rules as drafted by the Commission are as follows: “As currently drafted, Section 4 of the compact requires licensees pass a Qualifying National Exam. Currently the only national licensing examination is produced and administered by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB). To be eligible to use the compact, social workers must have passed the ASWB exam corresponding to the category of license sought. Social workers who have already passed the ASWB exam corresponding to the category of license sought will not be required to take an additional licensing exam.” (<https://compacts.csg.org/compact-updates/social-work/>)

We want to ensure that when these alternative pathways to licensure requirements become recognized in Maryland, that this does not bar Marylanders who have taken these additional pathways to licensure from being eligible for a multistate license under the compact. It is our hope that Maryland’s participation in the Compact expands opportunities as it intended to and that we continue to advocate for changes that allow individuals to grow and thrive in the field of social work.

For more information call or email:

Therese M. Hessler | 301-503-2576 | therese@ashlargr.com

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