

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

FROM: Starling Butler Hathcock, 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 oral statement in support of House Bill 345 on the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact for inclusion in the public hearing record. My name is Starling Hathcock, and I am a Licensed Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C) and the spouse of a Navy veteran. I reside and practice in Frederick County, Maryland.

The significance of this Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact resonates deeply with me for all the reasons my colleagues have already expressed. Last year, I shared how this Compact could benefit three specific clients and 1000's like my clients. Sadly, I can no longer speak to how those clients are doing because Maryland currently lacks a Social Work Compact, limiting my ability to follow their progress.

Today, I want to share how this Compact would benefit me and countless others who have had to retell the intimate details of their trauma.

Not only am I a therapist in Frederick, but I am also a therapist currently in therapy here in Maryland. I am a survivor of sexual trauma, and my journey into the therapeutic world began long before I became a social worker. My first therapist was extraordinary. Without her support, I likely would not be sitting here today.

Unfortunately, our therapeutic relationship ended before my healing could truly begin—when my family relocated to another state. This painful cycle repeated with each move, as licensing barriers prevented me from continuing care with the same trusted professional. Each time, I was forced to rebuild rapport, trust, and support with a new therapist—a process that can feel overwhelming and deeply discouraging. For trauma survivors like me, retelling our story to a new therapist is uniquely challenging, as it requires revisiting painful experiences and navigating the emotional, psychological, and relational complexities that trauma leaves behind.

In 2009, my family finally relocated to Maryland. Since then, I have been fortunate to find a therapist I trust—a relationship I have maintained for years. Yet, even now, barriers remain. When I travel out of state, I must cancel therapy sessions because my therapist is licensed only

in Maryland. This underscores the ongoing limitations faced by individuals seeking continuity of care across state lines.

The Social Work Interstate Licensure Compact would be a pivotal step in addressing this issue. It would ensure continuity of care for both clients and social workers who move or travel due to family obligations, military service, or other life circumstances. By preserving the vital therapeutic relationship, the Compact would reduce the stigma and burden of repeatedly retelling traumatic histories and foster better outcomes for all involved.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and I urge you to support House Bill 345 and help MD establish the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "SBH".

Starling Hathcock
Licensed Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C)
Frederick County, Maryland

