

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

FROM: Ann Smith, MSW, 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 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 a licensed social worker in Maryland, living in Baltimore County, providing both in-person and telehealth video mental health services. I have been a licensed social worker in Maryland for over 26 years.

Twenty-two states, including Virginia, have already passed legislation in support of the Social Work Licensure Compact. The ability to practice across state lines is becoming increasingly necessary, especially for those of us that offer highly specialized mental health services and treatment modalities to clients (for example, to address the increasing mental health needs of clients who are impacted by trauma). I believe the Social Work Licensure Compact is one way to address the disparities in access to behavioral health services, and can alleviate inequities related to geographic location, socioeconomic status, (dis)ability status, gender diversity, sexuality, and other barriers that can impede individuals from receiving adequate, effective and safe care.

The Social Work Compact enhances licensure portability for practitioners. Simultaneously, it empowers state regulatory boards to better protect consumers by facilitating the sharing of data and licensure information, rather than professionals becoming licensed in each state individually.

The Social Work Compact brings numerous benefits:

1. Expanding access to care for clients.
2. Ensuring continuity of care for clients and social workers during relocations or travel across state lines.
3. Simplifying licensing requirements for military personnel and their spouses during relocations.
4. Streamlines and strengthens 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 hope you will join me and many others to lend your support to the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact, recognizing its potential to benefit mental health service accessibility and continuity of care for clients and consumers.

I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ann Smith, LCSW-C
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