

Chair Dziedzic and members of the State and Local Government and Veterans Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to share testimony about my experiences as a clinical social worker who practices in a border city between Minnesota and North Dakota. East Grand Forks, MN and Grand Forks, ND are border communities that connect opportunities, resources and the lifestyle of a city. Home to about 70,000 people, there is much to offer the area.

Being a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW) through the Minnesota Board of Social Work and living in the smaller community on the Minnesota side of the river, the opportunities for employment are quite limited. While recognizing the need for more mental health service providers in our community, I began to explore employment opportunities offered in the area. An agency in North Dakota offered me a position. To work within minutes of my home, I needed to apply for clinical licensure in North Dakota.

Having a clinical license in Minnesota allowed me to apply for North Dakota licensure without additional requirements, but the process of application took several months. Once the license was received, the credentialing process (for insurance coverage) began, delaying employment for even longer. Had the Compact been in place, there would not have been such a significant delay in providing services to people in need. Likewise, North Dakota professionals offering their services to Minnesotans experience similar delays.

The delay in initiating services is not the only challenge a Compact could mitigate. To maintain two Clinical licenses from different states, with two different sets of requirements, was complicated. In order for continuing education from Minnesota to be approved in North Dakota, there was an additional request for prior authorization to ensure the content met with North Dakota criteria. While continuing education is of utmost importance, the cost of continuing education can be prohibitive, especially when working to meet acceptable guidelines for multiple states. I would be remiss not also to mention the cost of maintaining/renewing two licenses.

Most importantly, there is a mental health crisis and an increased need for Mental Health Professionals. This Compact, along with the social work licensing provisions included in SF4570, is an opportunity to limit barriers for professionals to provide services to those in need..

Sherry Murphy, LICSW
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