



WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF APPLIED STUDIES
*DEPARTMENT OF INTERVENTION SERVICES
& LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION (ISLE)*

March 20, 2023

Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee,

On behalf of the Counseling Program Faculty at Wichita State University (WSU), I write to express our emphatic support for the State of Kansas joining the Counseling Compact. The WSU Counseling Program is one of the largest training programs for mental health providers graduating with the eligibility to apply as Licensed Professional Counselors within the state of Kansas. Management of this program requires that faculty work directly with a significant number of stakeholders within the city of Wichita along with many of the rural areas throughout the state. The relationships we have with these stakeholders have afforded us an opportunity to witness some of the challenges that our state faces in regard to mental health access and quality of care, as well as gain perspective on the mental health needs of many Kansas residents.

We have witnessed and continually work to support the mental health profession in Kansas, which is currently facing a need for mental health care that is outpacing available practitioners, limited access to services in rural areas, and a continual need for increased diversity among providers throughout the state.

Currently, according to the 2023 State of Mental Health rankings by Mental Health America, Kansas is ranked 51st out of 50 assessed states and the District of Columbia for the overall status of mental health prevalence and care (see <https://mhanational.org/issues/2023/ranking-states>). This evidences a vital need for state support to help improve the overall care available to the people living in our state.

The Counseling Compact aims to increase licensure portability for counseling practitioners, much like existing licensure compacts for other health care professionals such as: Psychologists, Nurses, and Physicians.

It is our strong belief that the Counseling Compact will benefit the state of Kansas by:

- Enhancing mobility for counselors who meet uniform licensure requirements
- Increasing access to care for clients across the state, including underserved and underrepresented areas
- Ensuring continuity of care when clients or counselors relocate or travel to other states
- Support continuity of care for military personnel and spouses if they are required to relocate
- Support growth in diversity of practitioners and services offered across the state



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- Potentially improve the overall state of mental health and mental health care across the state

In addition, neighboring states such as Nebraska and Colorado have already joined the compact and legislation is pending in Missouri. If Kansas becomes a member, residents of rural areas along borders with these states benefit from additional opportunities for mental health care access and providers in these areas may benefit from increased opportunities for client base expansion.

As professional Counselors and Counselor Educators, we believe that joining the Counseling Compact is an opportunity for Kansas to assist our profession in reducing unnecessary national fragmentation and take a step toward providing a unified high standard of quality mental health care across the country.

Importantly, the Counseling Compact preserves each member state's authority to regulate the profession. Counselors utilizing the Compact must abide by the laws and rules of the state in which they are practicing, including adherence to the state's scope of practice.

It is for these reasons, that the Counseling Faculty at WSU strongly support the State of Kansas joining the Counseling Compact. It is our hope that Kansas will join the Counseling Compact to aid in increasing the opportunities, freedoms, and quality of life and care for counselors, clients, and those seeking care/services.

Sincerely,

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