

March 14, 2024

RE: HB 2484 – Proponent In-Person Testimony

Chair Senator Gossage and Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to address your Committee on behalf of the Kansas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. Founded in the 1955, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers with state chapters in all fifty states including Kansas. Social workers provide the majority of mental health services in Kansas and across the nation.

Social workers have been licensed at three levels of practice for 50 years including at the baccalaureate (LBSW), the master level (LMSW), and the independent clinical specialist social worker (LSCSW). In fact, Kansas led the way and in 1974 became one of the first states in the country to pass three levels of licensure. Prior to licensing anyone could legally call himself a social worker and offer mental health services through agencies or private practice whether they were qualified to provide such services.

**On behalf of the Kansas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, I am writing to express our strong support for HB 2484 which will establish and facilitate an interstate practice compact for licensed professional social workers in Kansas.**

**HB 2484 passed the Kansas House with a vote 118 to 2.** HB 2484 will allow social workers to provide continuity of care across state lines, including through telehealth platforms, without the cost and burden of seeking additional state-specific licenses.

Kansas and states across the nation are contending with a shortage of mental health providers. Passage of this interstate compact will remove barriers preventing social workers from providing continuity of care. The Compact will also improve the tedious, time-consuming, and expensive process of social workers having to gain licensure in each state where they want to practice.

The Department of Defense in 2021 funded this initiative to establish model legislation for multistate social work licensing. According to the Department of Defense, military families move every three years on average. This Social Work Licensing Compact would help military spouses who relocate and begin work without delay by reducing the time and effort needed to gain authorization to practice in a new state.

Kansas legislature has passed previous health and behavioral health care compacts including in 2021 enacting an interjurisdictional compact for psychologists and in 2023 for licensed professional counselors.

From a regulatory perspective, the Social Work Licensing Compact preserves the rights and authority of each member state and ensures that each social worker abides by their existing state laws and regulatory structure. The Association of Social Work Licensing Boards and the National Association of Social Workers worked to ensure this was a critical component of the Compact. The Council of State Government facilitated a large group of stakeholders that met for several years with the goal of preserving home state authority as a core component of the Compact.

Thus, a Kansas social worker accessing a multistate license must abide by Kansas laws, regulations, and rules that govern the practice of social work. The Kansas Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board (BSRB) has jurisdiction over anyone practicing in Kansas under a multistate license.

Missouri and South Dakota were the first states to enact the Social Work Compact. Our neighboring states of Colorado, Nebraska, and Iowa have bills that are rapidly moving forward through their legislative process.

The Social Work Licensure Compact will benefit clients and the social work profession by:

- Increasing access to mental health care for Kansans who work or live across state lines.
- Assist military personnel and spouses begin work without delay by reducing the time and effort needed to gain authorization to practice in a new state.
- Ensure continuity of care when clients or social workers relocate or travel across state lines.
- Modernizing criminal background data sharing between states which optimizes public protections for vulnerable clients.
- Simplifying current interstate licensure processes while reducing the cost burden for social workers. Social Workers will no longer have to pay multiple state licensure fees.

The Social Work Compact is a long-term solution to address the issues of licensure portability, practice across state lines, and workforce shortages in behavioral health.

With these benefits in mind, NASW Kansas Chapter is excited to endorse HB 2484 and urges your support in the passage of this critical legislation.

Sincerely –

***Becky Fast***

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KS Chapter Executive Director  
National Association of Social Workers