



March 12, 2023

RE: HB 2484 – Proponent In Person Testimony

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

My name is Wendy Funk Schrag, and I am a Masters level licensed social worker here in Kansas. I have worked in the dialysis industry for nearly 34 years, half that time as a dialysis social worker and currently as the Vice President of State Government Affairs for Fresenius Medical Care. Our company operates 23 dialysis clinics in Kansas and provides life-sustaining dialysis treatments to nearly 1,200 patients with kidney failure. We operate clinics in Chanute, Derby, Dodge City, Garden City, Great Bend, Hays, Newton, Kansas City, Lenexa, Liberal, Overland Park, Salina, Topeka, Westwood, and Wichita. Nationally, we operate over 2,600 dialysis clinics in nearly every state. We support HB 2484 which would implement a social work licensure compact.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services requires every person receiving dialysis to receive social work services from a Masters level licensed social worker. Most dialysis social workers follow patients at several clinics and may cross state lines to do so. Right now, we have Kansas dialysis social workers who have 3 and even 4 state licenses in order to serve all of their dialysis patients or to help cover clinics during times of social worker absences. This becomes burdensome with licensure fees and continuing education requirements for each state. Because our company operates in many states, we are able to move our social workers to areas of greatest need quickly as circumstances arise – whether that be due to staffing shortages or to cover temporarily during leaves of absence. However, that requires that social workers obtain licenses or temporary permits to serve dialysis patients in states where they are not located.

Social workers have similar licensing and educational requirements across all states, making them appropriate for a professional compact. Compacts assist in maintaining patients' continuity of care by providing access to quality and timely services. When staffing shortages or transitions occur when clinics are without a permanent social worker, the ability to bring in qualified out-of-state health professionals quickly is important. While reciprocity or temporary licenses may be available in some states, they are not a permanent fix. And, often there is a backlog in licensure processing.

For these reasons, we ask you to support HB 2484. I'm happy to answer any questions or provide additional information.

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