

**January 19, 2024**

**RE: HB 2484: In-Person Proponent Testimony**

Dear Chairperson Landwehr, Vice-Chair Eplee, Ranking Minority Member Ruiz, and members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services:

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 in the world 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 since 1974 - baccalaureate (LBSW), the master level (LMSW), and the independent clinical specialist social worker (LSCSW).

**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 interstate practice compact of licensed professional social workers.**

The Department of Defense in 2021, as part of an initiative to promote license portability for military spouses, recognized the social work profession as an component of health care and community services and funded an 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 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. Passage of the Social Work Compact will improve access for military families to care and increase licensure portability for social workers while maintaining the current system of state licensure.

Kansas and states across the nation are contending with a shortage of mental health providers. Passage of this interstate compact will allow for practice mobility and 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.

Seven states must enact the Model Social Work Compact Bill before the Compact Commission is established. Missouri was the first state to enact the Social Work Compact. The Commission will serve as an administrative body overseeing the Interstate Compact for Social Workers. The Council of State Governments oversaw the development of the legislation and NASW contributed to the development of the model legislation.

The legislature has already passed a number of health and behavioral health care compacts including physical therapists, nurses, emergency medical services, and audiology and speech language therapy. In 2021 – Kansas enacted an interjurisdictional compact for psychologists and in 2023 for licensed professional counselors.

Much like the existing licensure compacts, the Social Work Licensure Compact will benefit clients and the social work profession by:

- Allowing military personnel and spouses to maintain their certifications when relocating.
- Ensuring continuity of care when clients or social workers who relocate or travel.
- Increasing access to care for clients.
- Modernizing data sharing between states which optimizes public protections for vulnerable clients.
- Simplifying current interstate licensure processes.
- Enhancing mobility for social workers who meet uniform requirements.

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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