

January 19, 2024

In-Person Proponent - HB 2484

Chair Representative Landwehr and House Committee on Health & Human Services Members:

My name is Stefanie Metzger, and I am a Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Worker and small business owner in the state of Kansas. I provide direct therapy services to individuals across the state of Kansas via Telehealth, in addition to providing coverage of “hard to fill” positions in the field, and providing clinical supervision for new therapists earning their independent license through the state of Kansas themselves. I am in full support of House Bill 2484 which would implement a social work licensure compact similar to those currently held by other therapeutic professions.

We all know social workers love a good story, so I would like to share a few brief anecdotes to better highlight the impact on the public and my personal motivation to endorse this bill. I work with many college students and continuously see the obvious negative effects the current licensure restrictions have on a population that most often splits their time between their home state and their school state. Unfortunately as I have seen, the outcome quickly surpasses inconvenience and into territory that feels directly at odds with our professional code of ethics. I have had a college student who got into a car accident on their way to their home state for a break, and experienced high levels of anxiety and trauma-related symptoms that made it difficult to make the necessary journey back to Kansas. I was unable to provide clinical support when it was needed the most as they were over state lines. Another client had been working with me for a year to process and build skills to return to their childhood home following a traumatic event. Upon request for a session in the middle of their visit home to provide support and encouragement, I had to decline as they were over state lines. I have another long term client who works two jobs to make ends meet, has very little free time, but has never missed an appointment with me. In a difficult situation with limited resources, they moved 30 minutes in the “wrong” direction and suddenly lived over state lines. Out of distress over the possibility of stopping our work together, they offered to drive an extra half hour each way, of time they did not have to spare, to sit in a parking lot in Kansas to continue in their work with me without disruption.

I highlight the use of “state lines” not because I was not paying attention in my high school English classes, but to emphasize the pervasive presence that these state lines have on our work. Technology has made many wonderful advances that have helped us serve clients that traditionally do not get equal access to care and their choice of providers, especially in small and rural communities. However, those benefits of technological advances are lost on us if our licensure provisions do not advance in the same direction. There are many barriers to getting mental health treatment, state lines should not be one. I would appreciate your support to advance this bill that will improve continuity of care and reduce barriers to effective mental health treatment. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Respectfully,

Stefanie Metzger, LCSW

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SM', is located below the typed name.