



January 23, 2024

Kansas House of Representatives - Health and Human Services Committee

RE: House Bill 2484 – Enacting the social work licensure compact to provide interstate practice privileges for social workers

Dear Chair Landwehr and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony in support of passing HB-2484. Enacting the Social Work Licensure Compact will produce many positive effects for the people of Kansas. As you know, the Department of Social Work at Fort Hays State University is dedicated to training social workers and developing community partnerships to address the needs of Kansans and the communities in which they live. Training clinical social workers to redress the lack of mental health services in rural and underserved populations within Kansas is a central part of this mission. We have made great strides in building communities of practice and increasing the number of social workers to serve Kansans. Since the launch of our online degree programs in 2020, the number of students we serve has grown by nearly 400%. In the three years since the inaugural MSW class of 52 students, the program has swelled to nearly 150, with a waiting list. As you will see from the attached handout, most of our students are being placed in the state's rural and underserved areas. We support this bill as its passage will further assist us in recruiting and retaining high-quality social workers in service to Kansans.

This bill improves the ability of social workers to serve Kansans in at least two important ways. Though a practitioner may wish to remain in their home community, the lack of population and the increased expense of maintaining licensure in multiple states make it difficult. The compact will allow these practitioners to practice across multiple states with only their Kansas license. Through telehealth and other online service delivery platforms, clinical social workers living in rural and frontier areas can expand their potential service area and access markets that improve their ability to make a living while remaining in their home community. In addition, as you will see from the attached handout, while we are training many clinicians in Kansas, we have a growing cohort of students in other states. While these students go through the program at FHSU, they become familiar with and, in many cases, passionate about our primary service area. These students are also exposed to many potential opportunities to work in Kansas following graduation. This creates a natural pool of practitioners who could move to or utilize the same online platforms to offer their services to Kansans. These opportunities translate into more accessible and more affordable services for Kansans.

In closing, I urge you to consider passing the social work licensure compact as it will benefit both social work practitioners and the citizens of Kansas. If I can assist you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Tim Davis, PhD, LSCSW
Professor and Chair

todavis@fhsu.edu