

February 20, 2023

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and Distinguished Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2408, the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) today. My name is Nicole Livanos and I am the Director of State Affairs for the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN). NCSBN is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to leading regulatory excellence. NCSBN members include nursing regulatory bodies across the country whose mandate is to protect the public. The NLC is an important regulatory solution to aid Oregon's current nursing workforce shortage and to modernize regulation to meet the demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century healthcare.

Modern health care delivery requires that nursing care, today and in the future, be seamless across state lines, both for in-person and telehealth nursing care delivery. The 100-year-old model of nurse licensure in Oregon is not flexible enough to best meet this need. The NLC, which has been successfully operational for more than 20 years, allows a registered nurse (RN) and licensed professional/ vocational nurse (LPN / VN) to hold one multistate license, with the privilege to practice in their home state and other NLC states, without obtaining additional licenses. The NLC is currently enacted in 39 U.S. jurisdictions including regional neighbors of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah and there is pending legislation in neighboring Nevada and Washington. Just this past week legislation has moved in the Washington State House and Senate which would enter the state into the NLC.

#### *During Crisis*

Oregon policymakers recognized the need for licensure flexibility from the very beginning of the pandemic. Emergency action enabled nurses from other states to aid in Oregon's response to the pandemic. Although these policies enabled Oregon to temporarily supplement its workforce, allowing nurses licensed in other states to provide care within Oregon, these temporary solutions created an uncertain practice environment for nurses and facilities alike, and most importantly carried patient safety risks. The people of Oregon deserve a safe, long-term solution to address needs during health, staffing, or natural disaster emergencies.

Under the NLC, nurses can immediately cross borders and provide vital services to fill current gaps in care. This is imperative to aid in Oregon's efficient response to a crisis. The compact also increases access to care for patients during non-emergency times alike. The NLC enables patients in and outside of Oregon to have greater access to safe and quality nursing services.

### *Safe and Effective*

The NLC places patient safety at the forefront. To qualify for a multistate license, a nurse must meet their home state requirements for licensure in addition to the 11 uniform licensure requirements, which were derived from the highest licensure standards in nursing practice. Thus, Oregon nurses will continue to meet the state's requirements for licensure and by meeting the additional licensure requirements for a multistate license, they can practice in other states party to the compact. The multistate licensure requirements include a federal criminal background check and ensuring that a nurse's license is not encumbered or under active discipline. Once a multistate license is issued, the NLC mandates communication among state nursing regulators to ensure safety and empowers regulators to act quickly in the case public protection is threatened.

Under the NLC, licensing standards and disciplinary actions remain with Oregon. The NLC Commission is made up of the heads of boards of nursing from each state participating in the NLC and the power of the Commission rests solely with the administration of the Compact. The Commission has no power over nursing practice or licensing standards in each state. That power continues to rest solely with that state's legislature as all licensing and discipline remain at the state level.

### *Modern and Flexible Licensure for Oregon Nurses*

The multistate license will enable nurses across Oregon to practice across state lines, both in-person and electronically. This will reduce the burdens for nurses who already must obtain and maintain multiple licenses, such as case managers and those with a mobile patient population that they need to maintain continued care of. The NLC will provide immediate financial and administrative relief for these individuals.

As the telehealth industry continues to expand, so too are employment opportunities for nurses in the industry. To remain competitive in the fast-changing industry, Oregon nurses need licensure flexibilities that will allow them to care for patients wherever those patients may be located at their time of need.

### *Military Families*

Military families are burdened when their family needs to relocate to a non-compact state, as any family member who is a nurse must reapply to the nursing board in the non-compact state before working, a process that can take weeks to months. It is only fair that when we ask military families to relocate to Oregon – families who are already sacrificing so much – that we reduce or eliminate barriers to employment when they arrive.

*Patient Access*

The NLC enables greater access to care for patients across Oregon and states party to the compact. This is true for patients seeking primary, maternal, and mental health care, among others. By enabling nurses to care for patients where they are located, without state borders acting as barriers, patients are able to access more nurses from home. Patients can also travel to Oregon for expert care and maintain continuity of care from their health care team when they return home.

*The Time is Now*

The NLC is a permanent, safe, and proven tool to attract workers, alleviate regulatory burdens while maintaining patient safety, supporting military families and adding flexibility necessary for modern healthcare.

Thank you for your attention to this testimony.

Respectfully,



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