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House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Support for HB 2554 – Social Work Licensure Compact

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair's Javadi and Nelson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Josephine Bourke, and I am a licensed social worker in Oregon. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 2554, which would allow Oregon to join the Social Work Licensure Compact. As a clinician in private practice, I often work with clients who travel out-of-state at some point during their course of therapy with me. Most often, their reason for travel is to care for elderly or ill loved ones who reside in other states, and they end up being away for days or weeks at-a-time. Clinical care for these clients can be significantly disrupted, if not actually compromised, when I am unable to meet with them because of current legal restrictions on telehealth therapy services across state lines. This situation presents a serious ethical dilemma for me and other social work colleagues entrusted to serve some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Like many of my colleagues, I have witnessed firsthand the growing demand for social work services in our state. Burnout is at an all-time high, and we simply do not have enough social workers to meet the needs of all Oregonians. By joining the compact, we can help address this crisis by making it easier for qualified professionals to work in Oregon, reducing barriers to licensure, and expanding the social work workforce.

This bill would also provide much-needed relief for existing social workers by increasing our professional mobility. Many of us have family in other states or want the flexibility to work across state lines through telehealth. HB 2554 would streamline this process and ensure that Oregon remains a competitive and attractive place for social workers.

I strongly urge you to support this legislation so that Oregon can take a crucial step toward addressing our social work shortage and improving access to care. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Josephine Bilbao Bourke, LCSW