

Submitter: Rebecca Larson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2554

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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-Chairs Javadi and Nelson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rebecca Larson, and I am a Licensed Clinical 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.

Like many of my colleagues, I have witnessed firsthand the growing demand for social work services in Oregon. 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.

As the Manager of Behavioral Health and Care Management at a critical access hospital and rural health clinics, I see firsthand how challenging it is to recruit and retain social workers in our state. In rural areas like mine, it often takes several months to over a year to hire a social worker, and most of our candidates come from out of state. The process of transferring their licenses frequently causes delays, preventing them from starting work on time. Many social workers begin on a preliminary license, only to face unexpected gaps in employment when their full license transfer does not process in time. These barriers make it even harder to fill vital social work roles and provide consistent care to the communities that need it most.

This bill would also provide much-needed relief for existing social workers by increasing professional mobility. Many of us have family in other states or want the flexibility to work across state lines through telehealth. Living in a county that borders another state, I have seen how the lack of this flexibility has limited the services social workers can provide to patients who seek care in Oregon but live in Washington. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these restrictions made it especially difficult for patients unable to travel to receive care. 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,
Rebecca Larson, LCSW