

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

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

My name is Steven O'Dell, and I am a licensed social worker in my home state of Oregon and hold licenses in Washington and North Carolina as well. 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 clinical social worker in private practice, I serve mostly Oregonians but have clients who live in Washington while working in Oregon; during the pandemic, and before gaining licensure in Washington State, those Washingtonians would drive across the river, some parking in front of my Portland office, to have telehealth sessions in accordance with interstate regulations. I similarly had to seek a North Carolina license to serve an Oregon client who was displaced out of state for the care of a severely impaired family member. This placed a burden on me and impacted, severely and negatively, my ability to provide clinical services at a time of great need.

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 like me by increasing our professional mobility. Many of us have family in other states or want the flexibility to work across state lines through telehealth whenever clinically necessary. 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,

Steven O'Dell, LCSW, BCD