

Submitter: Kristen Fourcade
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-Chair's Javadi and Nelson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kristen Fourcade, 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.

I have been practicing social work in Oregon since 2012, and I currently am a licensed clinical social worker in Oregon and Washington. I recently had to get a Washington license, due to living right on the border of Oregon and Washington in the Columbia Gorge. It has been very difficult, in the last five years of running my private practice, to navigate cross-state requirements and having to refuse much-needed services to my neighbors due to their living across the river from me. This rural community is chronically under-served, and it felt against my professional ethics and personal beliefs to deny services to WA residents until I was able to get my license for WA (which took five years, due to regulations). I strongly support this bill, so that other border-living social workers, like myself, don't have to refuse to help their neighbors and are free to practice within their professional and personal ethics. It would also address the dearth of social workers and mental health services for Oregon's rural areas; allowing social workers from Idaho, Washington, or California to practice remotely within our state would greatly help our ability to meet the need of Oregon residents. All the other mental health practitioners in the Gorge region are either not taking new clients or have lengthy waitlists, so we need help from other states. This bill would allow that and greatly help our neighbors, residents, and practitioners.

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,
Kristen Fourcade