

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

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02/19/2025

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 Pat Wafer, 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've been a social worker, in Oregon for well over 30 years. I love what I do and believe that I have developed some effective skills, in this "helping " profession. The past 5 years, during and post covid, I've noted a tremendous increase in the level of needs of the clients that I am working with, more distress than ever before AND more difficulty accessing social workers or other psychotherapists, to provide (quality and appropriate and timely) mental health care. When a new referral comes to me, folks often share their journey of helplessness, trying to get connected with a therapist. When I call someone, to tell them my practice is full and I'll be unable to work with them, people are appreciative of my personal call, and yet express despair because they've had no "luck" finding help. It shouldn't be up to "luck" for people to get access to help.

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,
Patricia Wafer