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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 Harmony Kuri; I am an active licensed social worker in Oregon and I am writing to express **strong** support for House Bill ("HB") 2554, which would allow Oregon to join the Social Work Licensure Compact.

Qualified social work professionals provide many services within our communities... We are in the communities, providing support in schools, medical services, mental health establishments, in the community, in the various levels of the justice system, and serving individuals in a vocational or educational capacity, assisting families experiencing physical, mental, or emotional challenges, disabilities, or a need for developmental support. Even serving individuals in the military and our veterans through the federal and/or state government offices and area agencies. Political and environmental social workers that work and provide services, education, and advocacy at the macro levels of our communities and government to serve our populations, palliative, hospice, rehabilitation, and gerontology social workers that help families as they navigate complex medical and behavioral health needs in response to their changing health and/or lifestyle to substance use and mental health social workers prepared to assist clients as they struggle to stabilize their behavioral health needs. In recent years, there has been a growing demand for clinical social work services not just in Oregon but across the United States and the world, and many individuals in need of support and services to be more active in their health and communities cannot access the support they need.

By joining the Social Work Compact by and between states in the United States, clinical social workers can help meet the needs of our communities, as well as the needs of our social workers, reducing the likelihood of burnout and those leaving the field.

Joining the Social Work Compact will help Oregon address the critical social work shortage by making it easier for qualified social work professionals to work in Oregon, reducing long wait times and other barriers to licensure, and growing and expanding social worker availability in the workforce! Right now, and for the last few years, Oregon just has not been able to meet the demand for clinical social workers, increasing the risk of negative health and behavioral outcomes from Oregonians all over the state.

Additionally, supporting HB 2554 can help provide relief to existing social workers often stretched to thin and facing burnout, by increasing the staffing in the places we practice, as well as increasing our professional mobility, allowing social work professionals to visit or work near family and supports, as well as work across state lines through telehealth or assist in times of climate crisis. This bill, HB 2554, can streamline the processes that allow social workers to flourish and thrive, positively impacting individuals and families across Oregon and in neighboring states across the United States – Attracting professional social workers to Oregon and giving us a more competitive advantage over states not in the compact.

Along with many of my colleagues in the fields we serve, 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. This portability has been long overdue in the state of Oregon and in other states, reducing the barriers to care and support that our communities need.

Thank you for both your time and your consideration.

Regards,
Harmony Kuri, CSWA, QMHP, CADCR