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Testimony of Rep. Lydia Crafts presenting

LD 2140, An Act to Enact the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Good afternoon, Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee. My name is Lydia Crafts and I represent House District 46, which includes Bristol, Damariscotta, Monhegan Plantation, Newcastle and part of Nobleboro. Today, I am pleased to present *LD 2140, An Act to Enact the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact*.

As this committee has heard repeatedly, the need for mental health services in Maine is dire. We are all too familiar with commonly referenced waitlists, individuals and families in crisis, children and adults sitting in Emergency Departments for weeks and sometimes months, etc. LD 2140 seeks to address our mental health workforce needs to improve these all-too-common circumstances.

This social work compact seeks to enhance the portability of a license to practice while safeguarding the safety of patients. This is simple and straightforward and is similar to several interstate licensing compacts your committee has supported in the past. Interstate compacts are a constitutionally authorized, legally binding, legislatively enacted contract among participating states. States joining the compact agree to recognize a valid, unencumbered license issued by another compact member state via a compact privilege, which is equivalent to a license. In terms of the social work licensure compact, licensed social workers utilizing the compact will be able to obtain a privilege in each compact state where they want to practice.

A few things to remember:

- Social workers using a compact privilege to practice in another state must adhere to the scope of practice, laws and rules in the state and are under the jurisdiction of the state's regulatory board in which they are practicing.
- Social workers who hold an active, unencumbered license in a compact member state can use the compact to practice in other participating states, provided the social worker:

- Does not have disqualifying criminal history;
- Does not have any limitations or restrictions on any license; and
- Has graduated from an accredited institution

Passing LD 2140 is an exciting opportunity and is good for Maine people. Similar legislation has been introduced in 20 other states, and last year Missouri became the first state to enact the social work licensure compact. I am optimistic that this policy will improve outcomes, increase access to our mental health workforce and reduce the suffering in each of our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm happy to answer any question you may have.