

***In- Support
LD 1590***

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and honorable members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services,

My name is Kristie Worster. I am the Chief Program Officer at Sweetser, Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a Certified Clinical Supervisor here in the State of Maine. I am here today to testify in support of LD 1590 and the importance of honoring therapists who are licensed in other states through reciprocity and to highlight the challenges that currently exist.

Both the Social Work and the Professional Counseling boards have current rules to support reciprocity for clinicians who have a license and experience in other states, however, as a hiring manager of therapists over the last decade, I have seen firsthand how these rules have impeded a speedy process for applicants from out of State.

Take, for example, a young clinician moving to Maine from the West Coast. During the interview process, our values align between the therapist and the organization. The clinician might even originally be from Maine and we want our clinicians to move back "home". When the part of the interview comes to ask about Maine licensure, often the answer is no, and this signals to organizations like ours that we should expect a delay. Often, we lose clinicians to this process, and sometimes they opt not to move to Maine. I have experienced dozens of times in the years of hiring when out of state therapists have faced delays in licensing.

On the other hand, when a therapist has a Maine license, they can start seeing clients immediately when they start a new position. Depending on the board that the therapist is licensed through I know at that moment that it could be anywhere from 2 to 6 months before the therapist is ready to see the clients that are waiting for services.

Here are other barriers and challenges facing reciprocity for fully licensed clinicians from other states:

- Needed additional course work
- The current licensing state did not require a national exam
- The therapist took time away from practice in the state they were previously licensed in
- They did not graduate from an accredited university

Bottom line? We may have some version of reciprocity, but it's not automatic. A process in which there are further delays just to confirm alignment of credentialed out of state individuals is a process that is holding up care to the 10,000 Mainers on a waitlist for services. We must also have clear and concise communications and language around how to more seamlessly apply for reciprocity of licensure.

I urge this committee to ensure that independently licensed therapists in other states have a direct path to working for a nonprofit organization within the State of Maine so that your constituents are best served for their mental health needs.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kristie Worster
Chief Program Officer