



January 26, 2022

Dear Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and members of the HCIFS committee,

I, Katherine Marble, resident of Auburn, am testifying to support LD1920: *An Act to Enact the Interstate Counseling Compact to Address Inequities in Access to Clinical Counseling Services and Increase Maine's Provider Workforce.*

I am a member of the leadership team and Licensed Clinical Social Worker at Health Affiliate Maine. Health Affiliates Maine is a statewide licensed mental health agency. Much like other agencies, our outpatient program currently has a waitlist of over 3,000 individuals. Many people on this waitlist will wait over one year for outpatient services that an out of state counselor under this compact could offer today. Without the early intervention and stabilization outpatient therapy can offer, more our friends and neighbors are finding their mental health deteriorating. Our community members with behavioral health issues are stuck in our emergency rooms, or worse, in our jails because they cannot access the lowest cost services when they first seek help. While I believe this legislation has many benefits, the intended benefit of expanding access is crucial to our state. We are in a behavior health worker shortage that is negatively impacting our communities and institutions and driving people to access the most expensive levels of care out of desperation and we must act now.

The Compact will allow counselors who must relocate for reasons such as having members of their family in the military or having extenuating family circumstances continue to work with our community members via telehealth. By increasing the portability of credentials, professionals relocating from out of state can start their practices without the current cumbersome delay. In addition, it would make a new set of providers, equally as qualified, from other states, available to serve our communities. Maine has always been a leader in behavioral health. We should be a leader in expanding access as well.

Thank-you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K Marble LCSW".

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