



National Center for Interstate Compacts

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

CSG Testimony on LD 2140 – Social Work Licensure Compact

Joint Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

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Chairs Bailey and Perry and members of the committee, I would like to express my appreciation for your consideration of the Social Work Licensure Compact. My name is Kaitlyn Bison with The Council of State Governments.

The Council of State Governments (CSG) is a nonpartisan membership organization that serves the three branches of state governments. The National Center for Interstate Compacts is a technical assistance center within CSG that provides support to states on the Social Work Licensure Compact.

The compact was created through a cooperative agreement between the Department of Defense and The Council of State Governments. For 18 months, CSG developed the compact language with stakeholders within the profession from the Association of Social Work Boards, National Association of Social Workers, Clinical Social Work Association, social work regulatory boards, the social work education community, and others. The compact language was finalized in February 2023.

The Social Work Licensure Compact seeks to provide licensees with opportunities for multistate practice, support relocating practitioners, and foster workforce development by reducing unnecessary licensure burdens. The Compact will enable social workers to obtain a multistate license issued by their home state to practice in other states that join the compact, rather than get an individual license in every state in which they want to practice.

The Social Work Licensure Compact is similar in form and function to the seven other occupational licensing compacts that Maine is already a member of. A social worker must hold an active, unencumbered license in their home state to be eligible for a multistate license. Licensees must also pass a background check and meet other eligibility requirements related to education and examinations.

This improves access to social work services for Maine residents, while maintaining the current system of state licensure. I understand that increasing access to mental health providers is a key issue facing states, and we believe the compact provides one solution that helps alleviate that problem. In regard to Maine resident social workers' services, the compact would allow them to provide continuity of care for existing clients.



Additionally, a [recent study](#) found the effect of the Interstate Medical Licensure to promote a significant practice growth in the licensee's resident state and a preference of practitioners for adding practices in their resident state.

From a regulatory perspective, the Compact preserves the authority of each compact member state to protect public health and safety through the existing state regulatory structure. A licensee practicing under a multistate license must abide by the laws, regulations and rules that govern the practice of social work in the state in which the client is located, just as they would under the current system. The Maine State Board of Social Worker Licensure has jurisdiction over anyone practicing in Maine under a multistate license and can take disciplinary action to protect Maine residents based on their laws and regulations.

Joining the compact would also not necessitate the Maine State Board of Licensure to change any rules regarding Maine's licensure pathway for foreign trained social workers. Those social workers would still ultimately hold a degree that is accredited by CSWE, as is required by the compact, through their International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service (ISWDRES).

The Social Work Licensure Compact also benefits military families. If a military family gets assigned to a new duty station in a compact member state, the service member or their spouse can continue to work with their current multistate license.

Like all of the other occupational licensing compacts, the Social Work Licensure Compact will be governed by a commission made up of the member states. The delegate will be a representative from the Maine State Board of Social Worker Licensure.

The compact will come into effect once it's enacted by seven states. There are currently two member states (Missouri and South Dakota). However, states have introduced the bill since the start of 2024, with legislation currently pending in 24 states including New Hampshire and Vermont. If enacted in Maine, Maine would have a seat at the table when the compact commission has its first meeting to establish the compact's rules and bylaws.