



February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

Dear Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and members of the HCIFS committee,

I, Kristy Gelinas, resident of Sabattus, am testifying to support LD 2140: "An act to Enact the Interstate Social Work Licensing Compact."

I would like to begin my testimony by thanking Representative Crafts for initiating this legislation. I am a member of the leadership team and Outpatient Therapy Director at Health Affiliate Maine. Health Affiliates Maine is a statewide licensed behavioral health agency. Much like other agencies, our outpatient program currently has a significant waitlist, and we receive approximately 140 new referrals each week. Many people on this waitlist will wait for over a 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 of 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 experiencing a behavioral 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.



PHONE: (207) 333-3278  
TOLL-FREE: (877) 888-4304  
FAX: (207) 333-3037



306 Rodman Road  
Auburn, Maine 04210



PO Box 1150  
Auburn, Maine 04211




[healthaffiliatesmaine.com](http://healthaffiliatesmaine.com)

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 to 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. Lastly, this legislation also has the potential to serve as a recruitment tool to keep Maine at the forefront for social workers relocating to our state. 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,



Kristy Gelinas, LCSW, LADC, CCS  
Outpatient Therapy Director  
Health Affiliates Maine