

December 14th, 2022

To: Senator Mark Warner, Senator Timothy Kaine, Representative John McGuire

Subject: Support for § 54.1-3500.1 Counseling Compact

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Nicole, and I am a licensed professional counselor (LPC) practicing in Lynchburg, Virginia. I am writing to strongly urge you to support the Commonwealth of Virginia's participation in the Counseling Compact, an important interstate agreement that will enhance licensure portability for counselors and expand access to mental health services across state lines.

As you are aware, mental health needs are on the rise nationwide, and the demand for licensed counselors has never been greater. Unfortunately, Virginia—like many states—faces a shortage of mental health professionals, particularly in rural and underserved communities. This shortage is further exacerbated by the cumbersome process that counselors must go through when seeking to practice in multiple states. Without licensure portability, many qualified professionals are unable to provide services to individuals who need them most, especially in times of crisis or when seeking care across state lines.

The Counseling Compact, which has been approved by over 20 states, offers a powerful solution to this challenge. By joining the compact, Virginia would allow licensed counselors to practice across participating states without the need to go through duplicative licensure processes. This not only improves the mobility of counselors but also ensures that they can quickly respond to areas with significant mental health needs—whether it be in response to a local disaster, an emergency situation, or simply to provide services in states with higher demand for counselors.

The compact also facilitates the delivery of telehealth services across state lines, which became especially crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many counselors, including myself, faced barriers when attempting to serve clients in neighboring states, even through virtual platforms. By joining the Counseling Compact, Virginia would allow counselors to provide consistent and timely care to clients, regardless of where they reside. This is a significant benefit to residents in Virginia and neighboring states, especially as mental health needs continue to grow.

Additionally, the compact ensures that counselors meet high national standards for licensure and practice, maintaining both professional integrity and consumer protection. This will help bolster confidence in the mental health care system while enhancing the flexibility and mobility of our workforce.

I strongly encourage you to support Virginia's approval of the Counseling Compact. By doing so, you will help address workforce shortages, improve access to care, and support the well-being of Virginia's citizens and those in neighboring states who seek our services. The compact will enable licensed counselors to better serve the mental health needs of our communities, providing timely, effective, and high-quality care across state lines.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. I look forward to your leadership in advancing this important initiative, which will ultimately improve the mental health landscape in Virginia and beyond.

Sincerely,

Nicole Taylor

Licensed Professional Counselor, Approved Board of Virginia Supervisor

Lynchburg, Virginia