



House Commerce and Labor Committee

Re: S. B. 90 Proponent Testimony

Chair Johnson, Vice-Chair Manchester, Ranking Member McNally, and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee,

I am testifying today regarding S. B. 90, Enter the Social Work Licensure Compact, and its favorable passage.

My name is Meredith Poynter, and I serve as the Southwest Ohio Director of the Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition (MHAC), a statewide organization that works to improve access to behavioral health care for all Ohioans. I also serve as co-chair for the Regional Behavioral Health Workforce Coalition. We are a cross-sector community-driven collaboration of over 50 members to address short-term and long-term behavioral health workforce development barriers. Our goals are to increase support, build evidence, and lead the scale-up of best practices that build the behavioral health workforce that our region needs.

Ohio's participation in interstate licensing compact for social workers is critical for the behavioral health workforce. With five bordering states, we know this bill will help address our workforce shortage and allow access to existing behavioral health professionals across state lines. Currently these professionals face navigating the various state licensing requirements, rules, regulations, and fee structures that can create significant challenges for those looking to expand or move to Ohio.

Clinical Social Workers are the largest segment of the behavioral health field, focusing on the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental illness. They work in hospitals, mental health clinics, senior centers, state and local governments, schools and universities, substance use clinics, military bases, child welfare agencies and employee assistance programs. Creating reciprocal professional licensing practices for social workers between states, while ensuring the quality and safety of services through joining the compact will support all Ohio, and Ohio's workforce.

We applaud Senator Roegner for her work on this bill, and we urge the committee to favorably report S. B. 90.

Thank you, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

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