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Sponsor Testimony

Senate Bill 211

Ohio House Health Provider Services Committee

December 10th, 2024

Chair Swearingen, Vice-Chair Gross, Ranking Member Somani, and Members of the House Health Provider Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on S.B. 211, which upon enactment would join Ohio to the “Dietitian Licensure Compact.”

The Dietitian Licensure Compact is an interstate occupational licensure compact for registered dietitians. An interstate licensure compact is a legally binding, legislatively enacted contract among participating states. States joining a compact agree to recognize a license issued by another compact member state via a “compact privilege”. “Compact privilege,” is the authority given to a professional to practice in a member state which is equivalent to licensure in their home state.¹

The Dietitian Licensure Compact (“the Compact,”) is similar in form and function to the other compacts this Committee has considered, in that a dietitian must hold an active, unencumbered registration allowing them the right to use the term “Registered Dietitian”. Additional requirements for conveying compact privilege include meeting stringent education, testing, and practice hours metrics. From a regulatory standpoint, there are no changes to each compact member state’s authority to protect public health and safety through the existing state regulatory structure – a dietitian practicing under compact privilege must abide by the laws, regulations, and rules for the state in which they are located.²

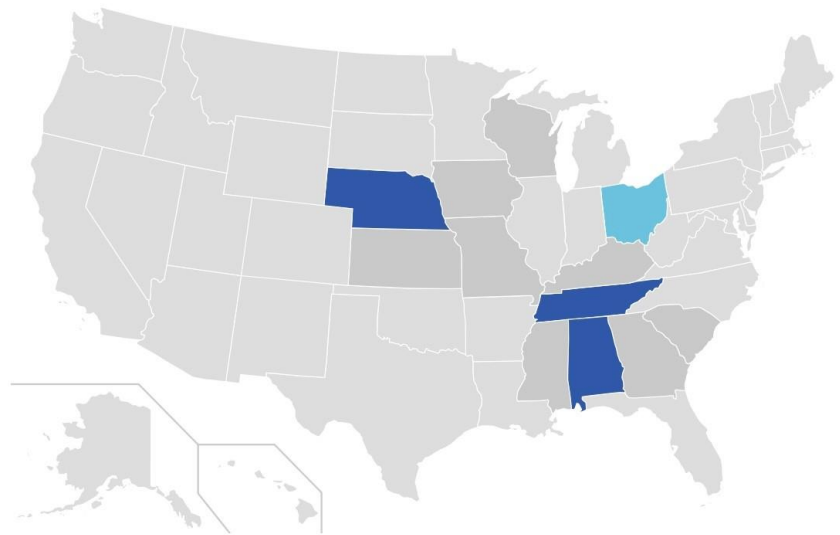
Ohio was involved with the Compact from the beginning. Nearly two years ago, the Ohio Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics contacted me to join them on the Council of State Government’s “Technical Assistance Group” to help draft the Dietitian Licensure Compact. I was thrilled to offer my assistance throughout the

¹ <https://compacts.csg.org/compact-updates/the-interstate-compact-for-dietitians/>

² Lines 263-267 of SB211

process, and my staff and I enjoyed seeing the progress during our biweekly zoom calls. After over a year of work alongside Academies from many states, the National Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the Department of Defense, and the Council of State Governments, we had model legislation in hand. Dietitians from the Ohio Academy had suggestions for grammatical/verbiage improvements after the model draft had been released and these changes were adopted and pushed to all interested states – a first for any compact I’ve been involved with.

As many licensure compacts for other professions have prescribed, this Compact language stipulates that a governing commission is to be formed after seven states have enacted enabling legislation.³ Between April and June, Senate Bill 211 received five hearings in the Ohio Senate Health



Committee and had no opposition before being favorably reported out of committee in a 7-0 vote and passed by the Senate in a 27-1 vote. Ohio is now the only state with active, pending legislation with Nebraska, Tennessee and Alabama having passed enabling legislation already.

Ohio’s dietitians chose to work proactively and take a seat at the table during the development process of this compact. It would be wonderful if Ohio could be one of the first seven states to enact legislation so these dietitians can keep their seat at the table while establishing rules for the compact. Passing this bill expeditiously would accomplish that, and signal that the Buckeye State will continue to be a national leader in increasing access to care for patients and maximizing mobility for licensed medical professionals through occupational licensure reciprocity.

The lack of occupational licensure reciprocity is a real barrier for individuals seeking to move across state lines. Researchers at the University of Minnesota found that the interstate migration rate for individuals in occupations with state-

³ Lines 954-958 of SB211

specific licensing exam requirements is 36% lower relative to those in non-licensed occupations.⁴

Maximizing mobility and ensuring license portability is even more important for our military families, and this Compact was written to expressly support military families⁵ by easing their moves – 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 compact privilege.⁶

I'd like to share some statistics from Dr. Elizabeth Burgin, a military spouse and licensed mental health counselor, that highlight the importance of this for our military families⁷:

- Military families relocate every 2-3 years, which is 10x more often than civilians
- 34% of military spouses hold at least one professional license
- 22% of licensees are unemployed
- There is a 26% wage gap between military licensees and civilian licensees
- 1 in 5 military licensees has waited 10+ months for a license transfer⁸

This legislation is important for all dietitians, not just those who learned their trade in the military. There were 4,916 registered dietitians in Ohio in 2023, with 400 of those registrations being newly issued.⁹ The passage of Senate Bill 211 will allow for increased portability for those nearly 5,000 Ohioans, by significantly decreasing the administrative burden of securing licensure in multiple states. Senate Bill 211's enactment will not only expand patient access to medical professionals, but also our many fantastic healthcare facilities access to the top staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

⁴ <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/research/sr/sr561.pdf>

⁵ Lines 32-33 of SB211

⁶ Lines 317-321 of SB211

⁷ <https://counselingcompact.org/tool-kit/> (see video time marker 2:05)

⁸ <https://counselingcompact.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CC-Summit-Slides-2021.pdf>

⁹ <https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/med.ohio.gov/about-the-board/SMBO%20FY23%20Annual%20Report.pdf>