

Senate Community Revitalization Committee

Re: Support for Senate Bill 90

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Hoagland, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Ohio Senate Community Revitalization Committee:

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers – Ohio Chapter, we are testifying to express our support for Senate Bill 90 and the opportunity to enter the Social Work Licensure Compact. This compact will have a significant impact on the social work profession, as well as to Ohio's workforce as a whole.

We strongly support the expedient passing of SB 90 for the following reasons:

- 1. SB 90 will promote mobility and address workforce shortages** by allowing social workers to reduce overly burdensome and duplicative requirements that are associated with holding multiple licenses, including but not limited to, paying additional fees for each license in each state and undergoing a background check for each state. SB 90 could allow for one background check and one fee to be able to obtain a multi-state license, valid in every state that enters the compact. Social workers in the military or military families would also greatly benefit from SB 90; allowing them to obtain licensure more easily when temporarily or permanently stationed out of state.
- 2. The public will have increased access to social work services** as the compact would allow more individuals to obtain licensure in Ohio and serve our population from other states. It will also address concerns faced by social workers living and working on Ohio's state lines to be able to more easily serve clients in need of services that may live either on or near state lines.
- 3. Ohio will be able to help set the guidelines and regulations of the interstate compact as part of the Compact Commission** if we are one of the first seven states to pass the legislation to enter into the compact. It is extremely important that we pass this legislation as quickly as possible as there are currently four other states with pending legislation to join the social work compact and one state with legislation already passed. It is vital that Ohio gets to the forefront of this legislation in order to be a leading force in setting the regulations for this compact.

In summary, the social work compact would eliminate duplicative application requirements, address workforce shortages, expand consumer access to qualified social workers, and reduce application processing times. Passing the compact would also establish a data system of information about licensees' adverse actions that would provide access to investigative and disciplinary information about licensees, expand cooperation among state licensure boards regarding investigations and disputes, and enhance public safety.

Social workers would join the many other professionals who already have access to an interstate compact including medical licensees, nurses, emergency medical services, physical therapists, psychologists, audiology and speech therapists, occupational therapists, and counselors.

The social work field has been chronically understaffed, leading to long wait times for Ohioans to obtain vital social work services. Senate Bill 90 is a clear way that we can expand social services to a larger number of individuals while also removing burdensome requirements from an already-taxed field of providers. We are asking this committee to vote yes on Senate Bill 90 and allow Ohio to enter and help regulate the social work compact.

We appreciate your time and consideration in this matter.

Regards,

Danielle Smith, LSW, CAE
Social Worker, Executive Director
National Association of Social Workers – Ohio Chapter