



## **Sponsor Testimony**

Senate Bill 149

Ohio Senate Health Committee

May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Chair Huffman, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and Members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on S.B. 149, which upon enactment would join Ohio to the “Respiratory Care Interstate Compact.”

The Respiratory Care Interstate Compact is an interstate occupational licensure compact for licensed respiratory therapists. 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.<sup>1</sup>

The Respiratory Care Interstate Compact is similar in form and function to the other compacts this Committee has considered, in that a respiratory therapist must hold an active, unencumbered license in a compact member state to be eligible to practice in a “remote state”. Additionally, licensees shall hold and maintain an active credential from the National Board for Respiratory Care (or its successor), have no adverse actions against their license within the previous two years, and pay any applicable fees to include any State and Commission fees and renewal fees for the compact privilege. 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 respiratory therapist practicing under compact privilege must abide by the laws, regulations and rules for the state in which they are practicing in.<sup>2</sup>

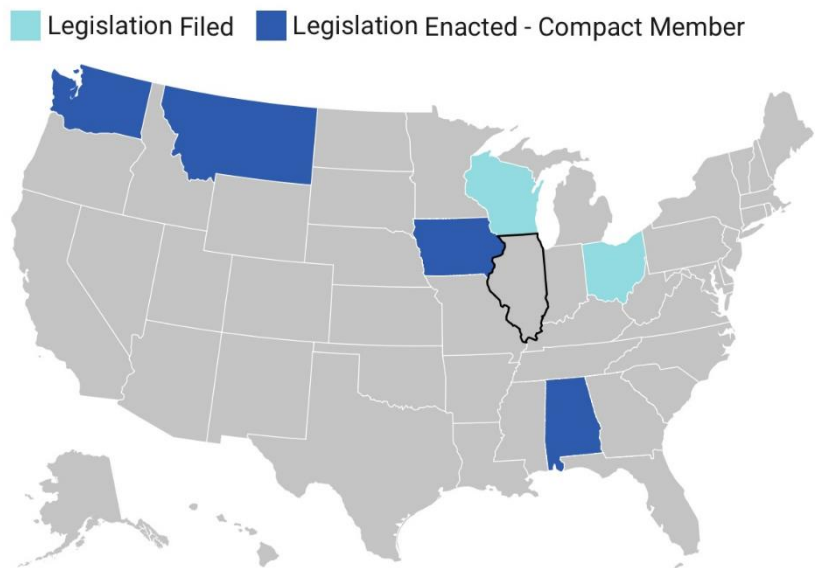
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<sup>1</sup> <https://compacts.csg.org/compact-updates/respiratory-therapy-licensure-compact/>

<sup>2</sup> Lines 226-234 of SB149

In 2023, the Council of State Governments in partnership with the Department of Defense and the American Association for Respiratory Care began work on the Respiratory Care Compact. The “Technical Assistance Group” that was formed included the National Board for Respiratory Care and the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care, state board members, board administrators, licensed respiratory therapists and other stakeholders who worked diligently over several months to create recommendations and a compact model that was then drafted into the model language and released in October of 2024.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> Washington, Montana, Iowa, and Alabama have passed enabling legislation already, and Ohio is joined by



Wisconsin in having active legislation for the Respiratory Care Interstate Compact.

With only four states having passed legislation, Ohio still has a chance to be one of the first seven states on the governing commission so that our respiratory therapists have a seat at the table when 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 respiratory therapists 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-

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<sup>3</sup> <https://respiratorycarecompact.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Lines 893-897 of SB149

specific licensing exam requirements is 36% lower relative to those in non-licensed occupations.<sup>5</sup>

Maximizing mobility and ensuring license portability is even more important for our military families, and this Compact was written to expressly support military families<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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 families<sup>8</sup>:

- 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 transfer<sup>9</sup>

This legislation is important for all respiratory therapists, not just those who learned their trade in the military. There were 9,443 licensed respiratory therapists in Ohio in 2024, with over 600 of those registrations being newly-issued in FY24.<sup>10</sup> The passage of Senate Bill 149 will allow for increased portability for thousands, by significantly decreasing the administrative burden of securing licensure in multiple states. Senate Bill 149's enactment will expand patient access to respiratory therapists, as well as our many phenomenal 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.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/research/sr/sr561.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Lines 32-33 of SB149

<sup>7</sup> Lines 251-261 of SB149

<sup>8</sup> <https://counselingcompact.org/tool-kit/> (see video time marker 2:05)

<sup>9</sup> <https://counselingcompact.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CC-Summit-Slides-2021.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/med.ohio.gov/about-the-board/Communications/Annual%20Report/SMBO\\_FY24\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/med.ohio.gov/about-the-board/Communications/Annual%20Report/SMBO_FY24_Annual_Report.pdf)