



**Ohio Senate Health Committee**

Senator Steve Huffman, Chair

January 27, 2021

**SENATE BILL 3**

**PROPONENT WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 3 (“SB 3”), which enters Ohio as a participating state in the national Nurse Licensure Compact (“the Compact”). The purpose of the Compact is to allow a nurse to practice across all the states that have joined the Compact under a multistate license. The Compact is intended to increase access to care while maintaining public protection at the state level. Under the Compact, nurses can practice in other Nurse Licensure Compact states without having to obtain additional licenses.<sup>1</sup> This multistate license will be issued by the nursing regulatory board of the nurse’s primary state of residence.

University Hospitals is a Cleveland-based super-regional health system that serves more than 1.2 million patients in 15 Northeast Ohio counties. The hub of our 19-hospital system is University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center, a 1,032-bed academic medical center of which Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital (UH Rainbow) is a significant part. UH Rainbow is a 244-bed, full-service children’s hospital and academic medical center. A trusted leader in pediatric health care for more than 125 years, UH Rainbow consistently ranks among the top children’s hospitals in the nation. University Hospitals strives to strengthen the health care needs of our community by providing outstanding service, the highest quality physicians and nurses, and using innovative techniques. SB 3 ensures that hospital systems in Ohio, like University Hospitals, advance cross-state care and virtual health while more easily recruiting talent during the peak of the nursing shortage across the U.S.

Currently, Ohio is nearly surrounded by states participating in the Compact. Kentucky and West Virginia joined the Compact. Indiana has passed legislation to join the Compact, while Pennsylvania and Michigan have introduced legislation to also join. At University Hospitals, our system expands all the way to the Pennsylvania state border and we have several nurses that come from Pennsylvania to work in Ohio. Joining the Compact will prove advantageous for cross-state licensure and virtual care. The care should follow the patient, and joining the Compact will allow for continuity of care and coordinated care, especially as virtual care continues to become more omnipresent. Promoting this expansion of telehealth will also improve the reach of nurses across the nation and free up more nurses to be at the bedside.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the demand for nurses is projected to increase substantially over the next decade.<sup>2</sup> Joining the Nurse Licensure Compact would promote access to care in Ohio and make the hiring process a lot easier in Ohio. It would allow us to hire nurses in bordering states more quickly and without the added financial burden of requiring a new license on the nurse. The

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncsbn.org/nurse-licensure-compact.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm#tab-6>

Compact allows nurses to practice across the 34 various participating states<sup>3</sup> and this bill would enter Ohio as the 35<sup>th</sup> state to the agreement. Nurses would not have to obtain an additional nursing license under SB 3, making practicing across state borders affordable and convenient. The Compact applies strictly to those nurses practicing as a registered nurse (“RN”) and those nurses practicing as a license practical/vocational nurse (“LPN/VN”), by authorizing the licensing board of the nurse’s home state to issue a multistate license that is thus recognized amongst the other participating members of the Compact.

The Compact provides benefits to nurses, patients, and hospital systems like University Hospitals. In addition to enabling nurses to practice in person or provide telehealth nursing services to patients located across the country without having to obtain additional licenses, the Compact would allow nurses to quickly cross state borders and provide vital services in the event of a disaster.<sup>4</sup> This is a helpful endeavor considering the state of the current COVID-19 pandemic. With nursing staff facing exposure to the virus and burnout by those nurses covering shifts left open by sick caregivers, having the ability to reach across state lines to employ necessary and lifesaving help during times of a pandemic is a necessary and critical safeguard for Ohio to have in place. Beyond the pandemic, joining the Compact will help to reduce the hardships associated with the nursing shortage in Ohio.

The Compact will provide safe and efficient uniform licenses for nurses, and the necessary safeguards are built into the Compact to ensure proper practice and accountability. In ensuring compliance and discipline, the Compact provides that under most circumstances, when a license is disciplined, multistate privileges are removed and this restricts the nurses’ practice to their home state until resolved. Each party state to the Compact is to have one administrator, who is generally the head of the state licensing board. The bill requires the Board of Nursing to select an individual to serve as Ohio’s administrator not later than 30 days after Ohio enters the Compact<sup>5</sup>. The Administrator gets a vote regarding rules and bylaws which ensures that Ohio’s needs are met and the best interest of Ohio is being fought for in this agreement.

We urge you to support SB 3 and to help ensure that Ohio becomes a part of the national growing trend of uniform licensure for nurses. Joining the Nurse Licensure Compact will promote the use of telehealth and promote access to care. Importantly, SB 3 will help hospitals provide critical healthcare during the pandemic and beyond by ensuring sufficient staffing and reducing the hardships associated with the nursing shortage in Ohio. SB 3 will increase access to health care while supporting state-of-the-art health care delivery.

Thank you Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee for this opportunity to provide feedback on this important legislation.

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<sup>3</sup> NCSBN, Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), link to list of participating states available at:  
<https://www.ncsbn.org/nlcmemberstates.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ncsbn.org/NLC\\_Facts-FINAL.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/NLC_Facts-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> R.C. 4723.111.