



Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairman Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and all members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to express our organization's support for Senate Bill 204 to enter Ohio into the Counseling Licensure Compact. OCA is the professional association representing licensed professional clinical counselors, licensed professional counselors, and counselor educators throughout Ohio. My name is Dr. Sean Gorby and I am a Licensed Professional Counselor, a professor at Capital University, and own my own private practice in Lancaster Ohio. I am also currently serving as the Government Relations Committee Chair of the Ohio Counseling Association (OCA).

OCA knows that this committee is very-well versed in the licensure compact model based on the important work you have already done to pass bills entering other healthcare licensure compacts. Counselors are excited to join that trend so we can reap the same license portability and practice flexibility benefits that compacts allow. Ohio counselors are particularly excited about the timing of SB 204 because it would allow our state to be one of the first 10 states to pass enabling legislation, giving Ohio a unique opportunity to be one of the original members of the Compact Commission and help set the rules for its implementation. As Senator Roegner stated in her sponsor testimony, two states have passed Counseling Compact legislation so far this year. The Counseling Compact is newer than some of the others, and the language was finalized at the end of 2020. However, it is modeled after already established compacts, like the physical therapy compact.

Once operational, the Counseling Compact will give Ohio counselors increased opportunity to practice in a more streamlined fashion across state lines. By applying for and receiving "compact privileges" through the Compact Commission, counselors will be able to practice in other compact states without going through the whole licensure application process in each remote state. The law merely requires them to meet any jurisprudence requirements of the remote state in addition to meeting their home state's qualifications for licensure. OCA believes this standard is adequate for ensuring safe and ethical practice, especially with the specific coursework and exam requirements associated with the Counseling Compact.

This bill will be particularly helpful in the following circumstances:

- For military families: Senator Roegner has already shared why military families would benefit from better licensure portability as they move to different locations in the service to the country.

- Telehealth: We saw more counselors utilizing telehealth during the pandemic and many patients found this modality helpful, convenient and safe. It helps remove any transportation barriers a patient might have. It also allows them to receive their treatment in a setting that is most comfortable to them (most times in their own homes), which is especially important for counseling. Telehealth also allows a counselor to continue treating patients who are “snow birds,” providing for continuity of care while limiting the administrative burden on the counselor to hold multiple state licenses.
- Cross-border practice: The compact can also be beneficial to counselors who live on or near other states’ borders or regularly practice across state lines. If border states also move forward with entering the compact, it eliminates the need to be licensed in multiple states.

As an addendum to this testimony, we are also providing the committee with a “Compact Fact Sheet” for your review. This document lists other benefits of the Compact, as well as dispels some common myths about it.

Members of the committee, we thank you for considering the perspective of the Ohio Counseling Association and we hope you are able to support this important legislation.