

January 9, 2024

House Labor and Commerce Committee, Honorable Mark Johnson presiding

IP Testimony Regarding Social Work Licensing Compacts

*Presented by Sonya Carrico, Mental Health Policy Program Director
Contract for Health*

The behavioral healthcare shortage existed long before the pandemic, but COVID brought a national spotlight to mental health matters such as depression and addiction issues. State legislatures are searching for solutions and funding to address growing behavioral health challenges affecting our communities and labor force.

Interstate licensure compacts have a history of being one successful legislative strategy to add some depth to local labor pools. Compacts provide an easier pathway to practice for somebody who wants to move or work in multiple states. This is of particular benefit to our border areas such as Greater Cincinnati where people cross the bridges to and from Kentucky and Indiana for work and services.

Licensure compacts also ease the ability to provide telehealth services across state lines. An option beneficial to both consumers and providers. For individuals living in parts of our state with no physically accessible provider, telehealth is the only means to access services. Compacts can also provide consumers choices when seeking a provider.

Licensing boards benefit in the form of standards as well as shared data, and states can use compacts for workforce development. Right now, our states use different titles and definitions for licensed professionals. Compacts create shared definitions and language which assists professionals wanting to work in multiple states. Today, Kentucky and Indiana also have Social Work Licensure Compact bills before the general assembly. If these states move forward, the region will have more access to professionals.