

February 12, 2024

### **Testimony in Favor of the -3 Amendments to HB 4071 (Counseling Compact)**

Chair Nosse and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care:

As a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist, I am writing to express strong support for including the Counseling Compact as an amendment to HB4071 (-3 proposed amendments).

Much like the occupational licensure compacts for nurses, physical therapists, physicians, psychologists and EMS personnel, the Counseling Compact will increase licensure portability for counselors, while allowing member state regulatory boards to better protect consumers through enhanced sharing of licensure information. Existing interstate occupational licensure compacts have been successful in reducing barriers for practitioners who wish to provide services in other states.

I believe that the Counseling Compact will benefit consumers—and the counseling profession—by:

- Increasing access to care for clients;
- Enhancing mobility for counselors who meet uniform licensure requirements;
- Ensuring continuity of care when clients or counselors relocate or travel to other states, and;
- Preserving and strengthening the current system of state licensure.

My only amendment of HB 4071 is that it includes the make up of a task force to oversee the implementation of the bills provisions, etc. but OBLPCT needs to be listed for LPCs and LMFTs, in addition to the other listed professions.

Lastly, one day I would hope that Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists can be a part of this Compact, not just Licensed Professional Counselors, but this is a wonderful start.

Importantly, the Counseling Compact preserves each member state's authority to regulate the profession. Counselors utilizing the Compact must abide by the laws and rules of the state in which they are practicing, including adhering to that state's scope of practice. With these benefits in mind, I am excited to support the Counseling Compact and its addition to HB 4071, and urge you to adopt the -3 Amendments.

Sincerely,

Gianna Russo-Mitma, M.S., LMFT