



## 2025 HB 1035

### House Human Services Committee

#### Representative Matthew Ruby, Chairman

January 8, 2025

Chairman Ruby and members of the House Human Services Committee, I am Melissa Hauer, General Counsel/VP, of the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA). I am here to testify in support of House Bill 1035. I ask that you give this bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

North Dakota is in need of additional mental health service providers, especially in rural areas where access can be difficult. Even in more urban areas, hospitals struggle to find enough social workers to meet the demand. Hospitals support the bill because it would streamline the interstate practice of social worker by improving public access to competent social work services. And the compact preserves the regulatory authority of states to protect public health and safety through the current system of state licensure.

Under the Social Work Licensure Compact, social workers can get a multistate license, which clears them to care for clients in a participating state, even if they don't live there. Social workers must abide by the laws of the state where the client resides. The compact alleviates barriers to practice and increases access to care, especially in areas that are underserved, geographically isolated or lack specialty care, by increasing the speed and efficiency of becoming licensed across state lines. Currently, social workers must seek a separate license in each state in which they wish to practice, which can be labor, time and financially intensive. A compact creates a more efficient processing system, while also protecting public safety. Other overall benefits of joining the compact include:

- Facilitating interstate telehealth mental health services
- Encouraging cooperation among compact member states/territories in regulating the practice of social work

- Preserving and strengthening state licensure systems

Other professions have similar interstate licensing compacts that have worked well to make licensing across state lines faster and more efficient, such as the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact (IMLC), the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Compact (APRN Compact), the Physical Therapy Compact (PT Compact), and the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT). From hospitals' perspective, additional benefits of adopting this particular compact are that it will:

- Facilitate telehealth
- Support mental health workforce needs across North Dakota
- Streamlines licensing administration for both licensing boards and licensed social workers
- Promote continuity of care when social workers or clients relocate
- Allow social workers to expand services into new markets, especially rural areas

In summary, we support passage of this bill and hope that you will give it a Do Pass recommendation.

I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Hauer, General Counsel/VP  
North Dakota Hospital Association