

January 16, 2025

Chairman Wobbema & Members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee,

My name is Megan Boucher, and I am an occupational therapist working in Fargo and Wahpeton. I have been the Vice President of Legislation and Practice for North Dakota Occupational Therapy Association's Board of Management since 2019. On behalf of the North Dakota Occupational Therapy Association (NDOTA), I stand in support of SB 2146, the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact (OT Compact). The OT Compact is an interstate compact that recognizes those Occupational Therapists (OTs) and Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs) who are licensed in good standing as eligible to practice in a given state via the "compact privilege."

Today, we're fortunate to be joined by representatives from the Council of State Governments (CSG) and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), who can address technical questions about the compact's structure. From my perspective as an occupational therapy provider in North Dakota, I'd like to highlight a few key benefits of joining the interstate compact.

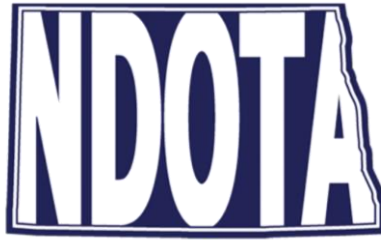
Workforce Solutions

North Dakota is experiencing a shortage of occupational therapists (OTs) and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTAs), making it difficult for businesses to fill open positions. Clinics and hospitals often face long waitlists—ranging from 3 to 6 months—for patients of all ages and diagnoses seeking occupational therapy. Additionally, schools are relying on contracts with outpatient pediatric clinics to meet the needs of their special education programs.

Joining the compact would allow OTs and COTAs to practice in North Dakota more easily, while those moving to the state could start working without delays from additional licensing processes. This would help attract and retain skilled professionals, ultimately improving access to care across the state.

Reducing Financial and Administrative Burden

For clinicians needing multiple state licenses, the current process involves tracking separate renewal dates and CEU requirements, which takes time away from patient care. Businesses often cover these licensing costs, adding to their financial burden. Joining the compact would streamline



licensure management, reduce costs for businesses and administrative tasks for practitioners, and allow more focus on delivering skilled services to patients in need.

Increasing Access for Rural Areas

Healthcare in rural areas faces ongoing challenges due to staffing shortages and unique rural dynamics. Joining the compact would make it easier for OTs and COTAs to practice across state lines, enabling new ventures in border areas and improving access to care for North Dakota residents—especially in rural and underserved communities near South Dakota, Montana, and Minnesota. Wahpeton, ND is an excellent example. Wahpeton is on the Red River, about 20 miles north of the border of South Dakota. For patients living in Wahpeton and Southeast North Dakota, there are few options for outpatient providers with a long waitlist. Many have to drive to Fargo to be seen, between 1-1.5 hours each way. This means that one therapy visit could take up a half day's work schedule, creating a large barrier to accessing services. With a licensure compact, a company could feasibly set up a clinic in Wahpeton to serve Southeast North Dakota rural communities in addition to those across the state's borders, increasing the availability of occupational therapy services to an underserved area.

Economic & Business Growth

Participating in the compact would attract more occupational therapy professionals to North Dakota, bolstering healthcare systems, schools, and businesses—while addressing workforce shortages. It also creates a streamlined path for businesses to grow and expand their reach.

In conclusion, the North Dakota Occupational Therapy Association urges your support for joining the National Occupational Therapy Compact. This step will strengthen healthcare, improve service access, and enhance professional mobility, benefiting both practitioners and residents across North Dakota.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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