

**House Human Services
Representative Robin Weisz, Chair
March 6, 2023
SB 2187**

Good morning, Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee. For the record, I am Dr. Jon Ulven and I am a licensed psychologist with Sanford Health Fargo where I serve as the Adult Psychology Department Chair and have the honor of providing clinical care to patients and supervising psychology residents as they train to become part of the behavioral health workforce. In addition, I am the co-training director for a new pre-doctoral internship training program we are launching this fall. I have been with Sanford Health for over 18 years, and I grew up in rural North Dakota.

I am a longtime member of the North Dakota Psychological Association, and I am also a former member of the N.D. State Board of Psychologist Examiners.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 2187, a bill that would allow North Dakota to join the Professional Counselors Interstate Licensure Compact. By providing a mutual recognition of other state licenses, the compact is an important workforce tool.

North Dakota, like every other state, is facing a mental health crisis. Unfortunately, our state has its fair share of mental illness, but less than our fair share of behavioral health professionals. Based upon information from the National Alliance on Mental Illness:

- 108,000 North Dakotans have a mental health condition
- 28,000 North Dakotans have a serious mental illness
- 29,000 had suicidal thoughts in the past year; we lost 147 people in ND to suicide in 2021
- More than half of North Dakotans ages 12-17 who have depression do not receive any care
- 303,000 people in North Dakota live in a community that does not have enough mental health professionals

The answer to addressing our state's behavioral health provider shortage is multifaceted, but I believe that we owe the citizens of North Dakota access to high quality services that are appropriately regulated. Licensure compacts are a proven tool to ease the burden of vetting out-of-state license applications and expediting what is otherwise often times a slow process.

I would also like to offer my support for the amendment offered by Senator Cleary.

The amendment would add psychologists as a mental health professional qualified to supervise licensed associate professional counselors (LAPCs) and licensed professional counselors (LPCs) as they work towards the next level of licensure in their profession.

This supervision modification was discussed and broadly supported at a North Dakota behavioral health workforce development task force meeting last fall (WICHE draft report attached to my testimony). Currently, North Dakota limits primary supervision to licensed professional clinical counselors (LPCCs) who have completed supervisory training. Based upon my colleagues' efforts to connect with local training programs, we estimate NDSU, UND and MSUM graduate 50 masters-trained clinical counselors every year. As a department chair, I have experienced the challenges of providing in-house supervision to ensure safe, quality work and to further develop the skills of a master's prepared therapist while knowing that my hours of supervision don't count toward licensure. In addition, the individual therapists had to pay for supervision from licensed therapists outside our organization.

Further, the majority of states allow psychologists and other mental health professionals to serve as supervisors. Minnesota is one of these states, and as of last July, I am qualified to supervise Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) applicants and licensees and Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) applicants. Two of my colleagues have done the same. It would be our honor to have the opportunity to serve as primary supervisors for our North Dakota-educated LPCs who wish to practice in North Dakota. As you well know, if we are able to provide training for North Dakota students in our North Dakota locations we are far more likely to keep them in North Dakota upon training completion.

In conclusion, I ask for support of SB 2187 and the amendment. Licensure compacts are an established, low cost, and effective strategy to increase access to high quality behavioral health services in our state for our patients and their families. And by modifying the state's counseling supervision requirements to include psychologists you will help expand safe, high-quality training opportunities for North Dakota counselors.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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