

Testimony In Support of Senate Bill #2187
House Human Services Committee
North Dakota House
Representative Robin Weisz, Chairman
3-6-23

Chairman Weisz and Members of the Committee:

My name is Rebecca McConnachie, and I am a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and Licensed Supervisor in North Dakota. I am a member of the Government Relations Committee with the North Dakota Counseling Association and the North Dakota Mental Health Counseling Association. I am testifying in favor of SB 2187. The bill allows licensed professional counselors to practice in all other compact member states. It will provide increased opportunities for counselors and increase access to services. There has been an increasing need for mental health services in recent years, and many individuals need to wait for weeks or months to get an initial appointment to see a counselor or other mental health professional. Telehealth services has allowed more opportunity to provide services to people in remote areas, and other states.

Currently, to provide services to someone in another state a counselor needs to have a license in that state, apply for licensure or apply for a temporary license. This could take weeks, months or not be possible due to rules in that state. This is even true for someone who is just visiting another state, or there temporarily. Individuals on a short or extended vacation or temporarily relocate to another state are not able to have continuity of care with their counselor. I recently encountered a situation which would have been impacted by this bill. An individual in the military, deployed in another state, wished to seek counseling. I could have scheduled a telehealth session if I was licensed in that state or if ND and that state were part of this compact. I requested a temporary license from the state and was informed I would have to apply for full licensure which would have taken months to complete the required paperwork. I was unable to provide the services and offered some ideas that might assist them. If both states were in the compact this could have been prevented. There are presently 18 states in the compact and another 21 states have pending legislation.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Prepared by:

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