



2023 Senate Bill 2187
Senate Workforce Development Committee
Senator Michael Wobbema, Chairman
February 16, 2023

Chairman Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee, I am Tim Blasl, President of the North Dakota Hospital Association. I testify in support of SB 2187 and ask that you give the bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Hospitals support this bill because it helps with our number one challenge: workforce. Residents of North Dakota will benefit from increased access to counseling services, which are invaluable to the well-being of our residents. The process of applying for an equal counseling license in a neighboring state with reciprocity is expensive, and a state without reciprocity is both repetitive and costly. Joining the Compact is a proactive step to reduce this burden and grow our counselor workforce.

The Counseling Compact is an interstate compact allowing professional counselors licensed and residing in a compact member state to practice in other compact member states without need for multiple licenses. This will help counselors by affording them greater ease of mobility and cutting the time needed for authorization to practice in a new state. The Compact will also create new market opportunities for counselors.

The Compact will help patients by improving continuity of care when clients or counselors travel or relocate. And the Compact will help the public by ensuring that member states rapidly share investigative and disciplinary information and cooperate in investigations of misconduct by practitioners, when necessary.

North Dakotans deserve improved access to mental health treatment, and we need to work collaboratively to reduce wait times for licensing of these important health care professionals. It will allow out of state providers to provide support by obtaining temporary licensure. Likewise, counselors licensed in North Dakota can strengthen their practices by

providing services to individuals in states with higher populations and increased need for counseling services.

Thank you for your consideration in joining 17 other states that have already decided to improve access to healthcare for their residents, military families, those in residential and hospital settings out of state, and rural communities by joining the Compact.

Please give the bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Blasl, President
North Dakota Hospital Association