

Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial
Services Committee
c/o Legislative Information Office
Cross Building, Room 214
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 1920: An Act To Enact the Interstate Counseling Compact To Address Inequities in Access to Clinical Counseling Services and Increase Maine's Provider Workforce

Dear Senator Heather B. Sanborn, Representative Denise A. Tepler, and other members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services,

We represent the National Association of Social Workers, Maine chapter (NASW ME) in support of LD 1920. The counseling compact enacted by LD 1920 will increase Mainer's access to mental and behavioral health services. Important factors to consider are that LD 1920 will:

- increase the number of providers licensed to provide mental and behavioral health services to Maine residents.
- allow college-age youth to continue care with their regular provider, while out-of-state for education.
- ease restrictions on across-state-line Telehealth services, increasing access to mental health care for persons with depression, anxiety and agoraphobia so severe that they cannot leave their homes.

A recent national poll indicates that in the past year:

- demand has increased for behavioral health services (a 26% increase in 2021), while
- recruitment and retaining of staff has become increasingly difficult (78% of responders reporting very difficult), resulting in
- increased wait lists (a 17% increase from February 2021 to September 2021)
(Morning Consult Poll, 2021).

In her thirty years of providing behavioral health outpatient services, Julie had frequent uncompleted referrals with persons who could not make their appointments due to the severity of their illnesses. She also engaged in counseling with college age youth, who would get lost to services once they went away to school. Not getting the care they needed often resulted in poor functioning, low grades and dropping out of school. Julie had one patient who had psychotic depression versus schizophrenia who did not get the care that she needed. A hospitalization ended her schooling.



These patients and all Mainers need improved access to mental and behavioral health services, which has been made more dire during the COVID pandemic.

We urge you to vote “yes” LD 1920.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Reference:

Morning Consult Poll. The Impact of COVID-19 on Behavioral Health Workforce. National Council of Well-Being. September 2021. <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/press-releases/nearly-80-of-national-council-for-mental-wellbeing-members-say-demand-for-treatment-has-increased-over-the-past-three-months/>