

14 April 2026

Dear Members of the Healthcare Subcommittee,

The Social Work Licensure Compact stands out from other licensure compacts because it applies across all three levels of the profession: clinical, master's, and bachelor's levels, not just one license type. This strengthens the entire workforce and supports the full continuum of care, including clinical mental health treatment, community-based services, social services, and prevention. By including all three levels, the compact creates a more coordinated system and a stronger foundation for Montana's healthcare and human services.

This approach aligns closely with the goals of this Task Force and statewide initiatives such as the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) and the Behavioral Health System for Future Generations (BHSFG). These programs depend on a stable and available workforce. The compact provides important infrastructure to help support Montana's current multimillion-dollar investments in behavioral health.

The compact also reduces administrative barriers by streamlining out-of-state licensure and increasing practitioner mobility. This directly expands access to qualified providers, particularly in rural communities where services are already limited. By supporting integrated care teams and reducing workforce shortages, the compact helps strengthen the long-term stability of Montana's health systems.

From a regulatory standpoint, the compact maintains strong oversight. State licensing boards retain authority while gaining access to a national disciplinary database that enhances public safety. Practitioners benefit from improved continuity of care across state lines and easier relocation for military families. For the state, the compact provides a practical tool to expand the workforce while maintaining appropriate licensure standards. Overall, it helps Montana meet the growing demand for behavioral health and social services while supporting the Governor's efforts to remove unnecessary barriers to work.

Montana social workers have been engaged in supporting this compact since 2023, when legislation was first introduced and received virtually no opposition from behavioral health professionals or those seeking care. We have worked closely with the Council of State Governments and the Montana Board of Behavioral Health to consider this licensure pathway thoughtfully. By passing this legislation, Montana would join more than 30 states (including North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska) in expanding workforce mobility and strengthening access to care. Thank you for the opportunity to present this information. Please reach out if we can be of assistance as you make your recommendations.

Sincerely,

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Overview of the Social Work Licensure Compact

Strengthening Montana's Workforce & Rural Health System

Expands ALL Levels of Social Work

 Clinical LCSW	 Master's MSW	 Bachelor's BSW
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Licensed Therapist✓ Diagnosis✓ Crisis Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Program Coordinator✓ School Social Worker✓ Advanced Practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Social Services✓ Community Outreach✓ Case Management

Social workers strengthen and support the entire system: clinical, community, and preventative services

Impact for Montana

- Expands workforce immediately
- Improves rural access
- Strengthens care teams
- Supports integrated care models

Aligns with Montana Priorities

- Reduces barriers & improves access
- Advances RHTP initiative
- Supports BHSFG initiative
- Strengthens longterm stability

BENEFITS OF THE SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE COMPACT FOR REGULATORS



Reduces application processing time



Provides access to investigative and disciplinary information about licensees



Expands cooperation among state licensure boards on investigations and disputes



Enhances public safety

BENEFITS OF THE SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE COMPACT FOR STATES



Provides a tool for addressing workforce shortages and strengthening labor markets



Expands consumer access to highly qualified social workers



Preserves state sovereignty

The Social Work Compact Advances RHTP Initiatives



1. Workforce Development

The Social Work Compact expands the workforce across all levels of social work. By reducing administrative barriers and increasing mobility, it strengthens recruitment, supports training pathways, including clinical supervision training, and improves retention, especially in rural and underserved communities.



2. Sustainable Access

The Social Work Compact expands access to care by enabling social workers to provide services across state lines, including through telehealth. Increasing workforce mobility and strengthening connections between rural communities and specialized services, while supporting consistent, ongoing care for patients.



3. Innovative Care Model

The Social Work Compact supports team-based, integrated care by expanding access to social workers across settings. Increased workforce mobility strengthens care coordination, connects patients to appropriate services earlier, and helps reduce unnecessary emergency room visits and high-cost interventions.



4. Community Health and Prevention

The Social Work Compact expands access to prevention and early intervention services by increasing the availability of social workers in schools and community settings. Enhances outreach, supports early identification of needs, and improves connections to care which help to address issues before they escalate.



5. Technology Innovation

The Social Work Compact supports telehealth and digital care delivery by allowing social workers to provide services across state lines. Expands access to care and strengthens integration with health records and care teams, supporting coordination, continuity, and informed decision-making.