

Progress on the Social Work Licensure Compact!

Thursday morning, the Senate Commerce Committee met to consider bill [S2688/A2813](#), legislation that would enter New Jersey into the Social Work Licensure Compact. Our Policy & Legislation Manager, Dr. Cherése Godwin and our lobbyist Princeton Public Affairs Group testified in support of this crucial legislation.

Below are the highlights of the testimony:

NASW-NJ testified **in favor** and explained that **New Jersey is home to over 10,000 licensed social workers, serving a population of nearly 9.2 million people**. We went on to express that:

- Social workers provide essential services and serve as the backbone of the state's social safety net, offering vital care to individuals, families, communities, and organizations;
- Despite their efforts, the demand for qualified social workers continues to rise, especially in addressing complex societal issues like mental health crises, substance abuse, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The Social Work Licensure Compact would:
 - Allow licensed social workers to practice across state borders without the burden of securing additional licenses;
 - Enhance the capacity of the social work profession in New Jersey by improving access to highly qualified professionals;
 - Help address workforce shortages in key areas like mental health, child welfare, and elder care, particularly in underserved and rural communities, as well as for military members.
- As of 2024, the compact has been enacted in 12 states and is actively pending in 15 other states, including Colorado, Nebraska, and Virginia.

It was noted that the NJ Chamber of Commerce, Care Plus, and NJ Hospital Association **were in favor** of the measure.

HERE'S WHAT THIS MEANS NOW:

Current Status of the Compact Bill

- **Second Reading:** The bill is now set for review by the entire New Jersey Senate, where it will undergo further debate and potentially be amended before moving forward.

Next Steps to Becoming a Law:

Debate and Amendments in the Senate (Second Reading):

- The entire Senate will review the bill and may propose amendments or hold further discussions on its merits.

***Third Reading in the Senate:**

- If the bill passes the second reading, it will proceed to the third reading, where final debate occurs. A vote will be taken in the Senate on the final version of the bill.

**Not all bills require a third reading so this is pending.*

Vote in the Senate:

- If a majority of the Senate votes in favor, the bill will pass and move forward.

Governor's Approval:

- Once both chambers (Assembly and Senate) approve the bill, it is sent to the Governor. The Governor can:
 - Sign the bill into law.
 - Veto the bill.
 - Send the bill back with recommended changes (conditional veto).

Becomes Law:

- If the Governor signs the bill, it officially becomes law. If the Governor vetoes the bill, the legislature may attempt to override the veto with a two-thirds majority.

To summarize all of this, we are excited to update you that the Social Work Licensure Compact Bill has moved to its second reading in the State Senate. While this is a positive step forward, there are still additional stages in the legislative process. And we cannot predict the final outcome at this time, yet we are very hopeful as the bill has moved twice unanimously. We will continue to monitor the bill's progress and keep you informed. Thank you for your ongoing support and advocacy in this important effort.