

Lou Mansolillo

From: Kim Gilbert <kim3155@cox.net>
Sent: Monday, March 25, 2024 5:41 AM
To: House Corporations Committee
Cc: rep-macnamara@rilegislature.gov
Subject: H7945 Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact

H7945

March 25, 2024

Dear Representative McNamara and Members of the House Corporations Committee:

My name is Kim M. Gilbert and I am an Occupational Therapist of 47 years, working in Rhode Island and providing services in the areas of public schools, home care, skilled nursing facilities and hospitals. My current position is providing occupational therapy services in the public school setting through a small contract company that I have owned and manages since 1997.

I am writing in support of S 2623 The Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact. Thank you for the opportunity to share my view on this important legislation.

In my personal experience it has been essential to hold both a Rhode Island and Massachusetts license because of the many patients I have seen for home care services in both states. It is common for home care agencies to accept referrals for patients discharged from local hospitals and with the proximity of the northern border of Rhode Island with Massachusetts, a second license has been required. Initial application and renewal of out of state license has often delayed services as the issuing offices are often too busy to complete the renewal process in a timely manner.

As a small business owner I have experienced increasing difficulty recruiting new staff and hope that this Compact would make obtaining a Rhode Island license more efficient and timely for applicants from neighboring states.

The Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact does the following:

- Improves access to Occupational Therapy care and choice of providers
- Improves licensure portability for occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants through a mutual recognition model of a valid license issued by other member states
- Allows Occupational Therapy practitioners to more easily cross state lines for employment opportunities or to provide services in multi-state locations
- Facilitates services delivered through telehealth
- Supports military members who are relocating or others who change their primary state of residence frequently
- Improves continuity of care for clients relocating, traveling between states, or living in border communities
- Encourages cooperation among member states in regulating Occupational Therapy practice
- Preserves and strengthens state licensure systems through a centralized data base and reporting system for licensing, disciplinary, and investigative information
- Enhances public safety by this system and requirement of criminal background checks
- Requires continuing education for all who practice under the compact
- Streamlines and improves the timeliness of the licensing application experience
- Provides for individual states to charge an appropriate fee for a compact privilege potentially increasing revenue

- Establishes an Interstate Compact Commission to carry out the compact purpose with each member state designating a Compact Commissioner as a representative

The Occupational Therapy Compact does not:

- Change State licensure law, rules and regulations or scope of practice
- Take over state regulatory authority
- Alter the state's authority to protect the public and regulate the OT profession
- Create a financial burden
- Require individual clinicians to participate – seeking compact privileges in other states is entirely voluntary

28 States have enacted OT compact legislation. 7 states have introduced legislation and several others are considering or beginning to introduce legislation including our neighbors in the Tri-State area and New England. I believe this legislation would be good for Rhode Island.

Please approve S2623.

Thank you for your service, time and consideration,
Kim M. Gilbert, OTR/L
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