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Chairperson Joshua Miller and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Chairperson Joseph J. Solomon, Jr., and Members of the House Corporations Committee

The Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy (MAOT) is writing to support the Rhode Island Occupational Therapy Association (RIOTA) to promote the passage of S2632 and H7945. MAOT is the state-level membership organization for occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants in Massachusetts, representing over 8500 occupational therapy professionals.

These bills provide for an Occupational Therapy Interstate Licensure Compact for Rhode Island occupational therapy practitioners. At the time of this writing, 28 states have instituted OT Interstate Compact Legislation. Similar legislation is being proposed in Massachusetts, Vermont, and New York, and Connecticut will likely follow in the future. This legislation has already passed in New Hampshire and Maine.

In the New England region, it is common for consumers to cross our borders for services. It is also not uncommon for Occupational Therapy practitioners to do the same or work in more than one state to address our border communities. With our recent experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth services have expanded in use as a service delivery model which may require us to reach across state lines. Many larger health care systems have sites in multiple states, all of which require professional licensure in the state where services are delivered. Healthcare staffing is at a critical level and many practitioners are requiring more mobility or additional jobs to also meet their basic needs. Providing a more efficient system to make license recognition portable has the potential to assist with all these challenges.

Much like the existing licensure compacts for nurses, physical therapists, physicians, psychologists and EMS personnel, the OT Compact will increase licensure portability while allowing member state regulatory boards to better protect consumers through enhanced sharing of licensure information. Existing interstate occupational licensure compacts have been successful in reducing barriers for practitioners who wish to provide services in other states.

We recognize that the OT Compact will benefit consumers, our members, and the profession by:

- Enhancing mobility for occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants with license portability for clinicians through a mutual recognition model in compact states;
- Increasing access to care for clients across borders and through telehealth needs;
- Facilitating continuity of care when clients or practitioners relocate or travel to another state;
- Allowing military personnel and spouses to more easily maintain their certifications when relocating without having to negotiate the often-lengthy licensing requirements which may limit time-sensitive opportunities for employment;
- Improve efficiency and timeliness in license privilege applications through a centralized data base and portal to request compact privileges; and

- Preserving and strengthening the current system of state licensure along with supporting compact states in regulating the occupational therapy profession through the sharing of standards and information.

Importantly, the OT Compact preserves each member state's authority to regulate the profession. Practitioners utilizing the OT Compact must abide by the laws and rules of the state in which they are practicing, including adhering to that state's scope of practice.

The OT Licensure Compact will not alter state legislation or rules and regulations in any way. These remain the state's domain. The Compact Commission simply provides a means to share home state license information such as transcripts, initial certification information, and of course any disciplinary concerns that would impact an individual's ability to actively use their license. With this information in place, requesting mutual recognition privilege in another state becomes a matter of minutes online versus weeks or months often required to obtain an individual license. Individual practitioner participation is voluntary and increased costs or loss of revenue are not expected for states.

MAOT supports the OT Interstate Compact Legislation and urges you to pass S2632 and H7945.

Respectfully submitted,

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