



NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TO: Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families

FROM: State Representative Nancy VanderMeer

DATE: May 21st, 2025

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 80

Thank you, Chairperson Snyder, for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 80 today and thank you to members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families for being here. As many of you are aware, interstate compacts allow states to coordinate across state lines and create agreements to implement standards for licensing of specific professions. Wisconsin has recently enacted legislation allowing our state to participate in a number of interstate compacts including the Dental Compact, the Physical Therapy Compact, the Occupational Therapy Compact, the Enhanced Nurse Licensing Compact (eNLC), and others.

As you're probably familiar, AB 80, which ratifies the Social Work Compact in our state, is not notably different from a number of compacts that this body has worked with, passed, and enacted in the past few years. The Social Work Licensure Compact allows for Social Workers to practice either in person or virtually across state lines in states that have enacted it. As a result, quick and efficient access to social work services will be increased. As of March of this year, twenty-two states have passed the Social Work Compact, including Iowa, Minnesota and Missouri.

Under this compact, a professional in Wisconsin wishing to obtain an **optional** compact license would apply to receive the license and then, if issued, be able to receive a privilege to practice in other compact states. The inverse would be true for compact licensees from other states wishing to practice in our state. State participation in the Compact will provide a number of benefits to licensed professionals, including: eliminating the need for Social Workers to hold licenses in multiple states, facilitating telehealth, supporting workforce needs across states, streamlining licensing administration for licensing boards and licensed Social Workers, promoting continuity of care when Social Workers or clients relocate, allowing Social Workers to expand services into new areas, and promoting uniformity of licensing standards.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to be here today, the opportunity for a public hearing on this legislation, and the chance to move this bill forward in the process. Also, thank you to the committee members that already registered their support by co-sponsoring this bill and I respectfully ask all of you to help ratify this compact here in Wisconsin.



ROB STAFSHOLT

STATE SENATOR • 10th SENATE DISTRICT

(608) 266-7745
Toll Free: (800) 862-1092
Sen.Stafsholt@legis.wi.gov

P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

TO: Assembly Committee on Children and Families

FROM: Senator Rob Stafsholt

DATE: May 21, 2025

SUBJECT: Testimony in Favor of Assembly Bill 80

Thank you, Chairman Snyder and members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families, for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of Assembly Bill 80.

Wisconsin is facing a severe shortage of social workers, and the legal restrictions under current law impede their ability to deliver care to those in need.

This bill enters Wisconsin into the Social Work Licensure Compact, which provides the opportunity for a social worker to practice in other compact states without needing additional red tape and licensure.

Participation in the Compact provides multiple other benefits, including addressing workforce shortages, which is especially helpful in rural and/or border areas, facilitating telehealth, streamlining the licensing process for both the boards and the social workers, encouraging continuity of care when social workers or clients relocate, as well as other benefits.

Many other professions have licensure compacts to ease these burdens, including physicians, nurses, advanced practice registered nurses, EMTs, physical therapists, psychologists, audiology and speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, counselors, and more. Adding social workers to this list is a common-sense way to streamline this process.

Thank you, members. I ask for your support and would be happy to meet with you to address any concerns or answer any questions about this bill.

TESTIMONY PROVIDED BY NASW-WI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MARC HERSTAND IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 80, THE SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE COMPACT BILL

Chairperson Snyder and members of the Assembly Committee on Children & Families. I am speaking in strong support for Assembly Bill 80, the Social Work Licensure Compact bill.

I want to begin by thanking State Representative Nancy Vandermeer and State Senator Rob Stafsholt for their leadership in sponsoring this bill. I am also very appreciative of the bipartisan support this bill has received in both the State Assembly and State Senate.

I first became most acutely aware of the need for a Social Work Licensure Compact during the COVID-19 pandemic. As you will all recall, colleges around the United States closed temporarily during the beginning of the pandemic and many students living on campuses moved back to their parents' home out of state. I began receiving many phone calls from Licensed Clinical Social Workers providing mental health services to these students asking if they could continue to provide their services to these students through tele-mental health. I had to tell the Clinical Social Worker that they could not do so unless they were also licensed in that state or that state had some other law allowing them to practice. This issue refers to one of the major benefits of a Social Work Licensure Compact, the continuity of services for clients who have moved permanently or temporarily to another state. Apart from the immediate impact of relocation at the beginning of the pandemic, I have received numerous phone calls and emails from Clinical Social Workers asking if they can provide services to a client who has moved out of state for a summer, semester, winter (snowbird) or even a shorter length of time and whether the Clinical Social Worker can continue to provide services to their clients if they relocate temporarily out of state. These problematic issues that impact continuity of care would be fixed with a Compact.

The second huge benefit for the Social Work Licensure Compact is the ease to which out of state social workers relocating to Wisconsin could become licensed and go to work immediately. Over the last number of years, I have had too many conversations with Licensed Clinical Social Workers from other states who have moved to Wisconsin and have become extremely frustrated with the process of obtaining Wisconsin licensure. I had such a conversation with an LCSW last week with 15 years' experience who after I explained to her the process of obtaining Wisconsin licensure, said she would wait until the Compact was passed! At a time with a serious shortage of mental health professionals in Wisconsin, I have had too many similar conversations with LCSW's who have moved here with decades of experience and declined to get Wisconsin licensure after they learned the amount of paperwork and contacts with former supervisors they

would need to make. The Social Work Licensure Compact would solve this problem and be a great help to the mental health provider workforce shortage throughout the state.

A third benefit would apply to Clinical Social Workers working in border communities. Currently a Clinical Social Worker living and working in Beloit or Kenosha could not serve a client living right across the border in Illinois unless the client drove to their clinic. If the client was sick or had transportation issues, the Clinical Social Worker could not provide tele-mental health to the client living in Illinois. This makes no sense and is very detrimental to the client. If this same Clinical Social Worker wanted to open up their own clinic across the border in Illinois to better serve their Illinois clients, they could not do so unless they obtained Illinois licensure.

A fourth benefit of the Social Work Licensure Compact is that it would enable Wisconsin Clinical Social Workers with a critical language skill or clinical specialty to provide services to clients out of state who may not be able to easily find this specialty service in their community. An example would be of a Wisconsin clinician speaking Hmong or American Sign Language being able to provide services to Hmong speaking clients or American Sign Language clients in Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois or another state.

The Social Work Licensure Compact has now passed in 28 states with 12 additional states having legislation pending. Our neighboring states of Iowa and Minnesota have both passed the Social Work Licensure Compact. According to the conversations I have had with staff from the National Center for Interstate Compacts, this is the fastest moving Compact legislation ever.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 80, the Social Work Licensure Compact. I am happy to answer any questions.

TESTIMONY PROVIDED BY ANDREW S. BAILEY, LCSW IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 80, THE SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE COMPACT BILL

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Andrew Bailey, and I'm a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and owner of a small psychotherapy practice in Wales. I am here to testify in support of Assembly Bill 80, the Social Work Licensure Compact bill.

I'm here to testify that this bill is important to me individually, to my fellow professionals, and to the people of Wisconsin.

As a business owner and a psychotherapist, I believe that if our state were to agree to this compact, that it would have a positive impact for our small psychotherapy practices - each of which is a small business. I myself have had patients who have moved out of state and unfortunately had to end their care, despite having productive therapeutic relationships. Each time this occurs, I am not only losing business, but my patient is also losing a relationship with an important care provider. This is particularly frustrating because I have all the technology necessary to continue to see these patients, yet find myself unable to continue their care. It is simply too much work and expense for me to hold a license in multiple states as the system stands today.

This bill is important to my peers as well. Just the other day I spoke with a friend & colleague who moved here from Alabama. This peer informed me that she attempted to obtain her license here in Wisconsin, but found the process too difficult. This individual stopped providing mental health care despite being fully qualified to do so, all because of a lack of a national license. Many social workers face the same decisions when moving from state to state.

This brings us to the people of Wisconsin, who stand to gain perhaps the most from this bill. Those who benefit from it will include college students, who frequently move in and out of the state, and experience disruption to their services regularly. Also included are those who over-winter in other parts of the country, who can attest to the near-impossibility of finding someone licensed in two states. Another huge group are those who live near borders with other states, who might lose an important clinical relationship because they had to move over the border to find a job or housing. But ultimately all Wisconsinites - particularly those who live in rural areas - will benefit from the significant expansion of available healthcare workers who will be able to provide services through telehealth.

Now I'm not a politician, but this issue really seems to be a home-run. There really only seem to be winners with this bill - no losers. Also, this bill should be appealing to people of all political persuasions. So please, help our profession catch up to the 21st century, and secure a political win for yourselves in the process. Allow us to join many of our healthcare providing peers who already have their own compact.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on behalf of this issue, and on behalf of the people of Wisconsin.



To: Members of the Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Children and Families

From: Kyle Maichle, President and Board Chairman, Americans for Autism Advocacy

Date: May 20, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 80: Ratification of Wisconsin Joining the Social Work Licensure Interstate Compact

Chairman Snyder, Vice Chair Penterman, and Ranking Member Billings:

Good Morning, my name is Kyle Maichle from Sun Prairie, WI, and I serve as President and Board Chairman of Americans for Autism Advocacy (AFAA).

AFAA is an IRS 501(c)4 organization registered with the Internal Revenue Service. AFAA is dedicated to advocating for economic, educational, ethics reform, and health care policies that benefit the neurodivergent communities at the state and federal levels.

AFAA strongly supports Wisconsin Assembly Bill 80, which would make Wisconsin the 29th state to adopt the Social Work Licensure Interstate Compact¹. Building on its existing membership in the Counseling² and Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT)³. Joining the Social Work Licensure Compact would further establish Wisconsin as an attractive state for mental health professionals. AFAA maintains that only qualified, licensed, and competent providers in good standing should deliver these crucial services. Wisconsin has a strong history of providing excellent support for its neurodivergent population. Autism Parenting Magazine ranks The Badger State as the eighth most supportive in the nation for raising children with Autism⁴.

AB 80 Meets a Need to Ensure More Licensed Social Workers Can Anticipate Increases of Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services revealed the findings of the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDMM) survey on April 17, 2025⁵. In 2022, HHS selected Wisconsin as one of 14 states for a survey monitoring Autism diagnosis in children aged four to eight. This ADDMM survey focused on eight counties in Southeastern Wisconsin, testing 28,098 students for signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The survey revealed that Wisconsin had the second highest ASD prevalence at 38.4 percent, the second-highest among the surveyed states. California had the highest ASD prevalence at over 53.1 percent, with monitoring conducted only in San Diego County. The increased prevalence of ASD in Wisconsin found in the ADDMM survey shows that The Badger State needs more qualified social workers to respond to the increase in ASD diagnosis. Neurodivergent individuals depending on their circumstances work with a team of qualified professionals. These professionals answer needs

¹ <https://swcompact.org/compact-map/>

² <https://counselingcompact.gov/map/>

³ <https://psypact.gov/page/psypactmap>

⁴ Autism Parenting Magazine, <https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/supportive-states-raising-autism-child/>

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/74/ss/ss7402a1.htm>

from providing psychotherapy services to social support delivered by licensed social workers. Wisconsin's entrance into the Social Work Licensure Compact is a positive step forward in anticipating the increased need for licensed professionals to respond to ASD diagnosis.

AB 80 Ensures a Central Database Among Member States for Tracking Discipline

AFAA also supports AB 80 because Wisconsin's application into the Social Work Licensure Interstate Compact creates a coordinated data system on disciplinary records of licensed professionals. AB 80 ensures that if a social worker in another state is under a disciplinary order, they cannot obtain a Wisconsin license until all conditions of the order are met. These are conditions set forth by the Social Work Licensure Interstate Compact as a condition of membership. AFAA supports AB 80 because Wisconsin's participation in the Social Work Licensure Interstate Compact will establish a unified database of disciplinary actions against licensed social workers. This bill ensures that social workers facing disciplinary measures in other compact member states cannot be licensed in Wisconsin until all conditions of those orders are satisfied, as mandated by the Compact Commission for membership. Wisconsin would be required to submit timely data to the Compact Commission. This rule would apply to Iowa and Minnesota which are member states of the Compact Commission. Illinois and Michigan are currently not members of the Compact Commission. Legislators are currently considering membership in the Illinois General Assembly, while Michigan is not considering such legislation⁶. Wisconsin legislators are correct to be concerned about the possibility of social workers facing disciplinary actions in states not belonging to the Social Work Licensure Interstate Compact Commission potentially obtaining licenses in Wisconsin. AFAA urges this honorable Legislature to work with the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) to ensure proper protocols are met.

Addressing The Shortage of Social Workers and Other Mental Health Professionals

A 2023 survey by the nonprofit NRI revealed that 41 states face a shortage of social workers with Master's degrees. This finding highlights the current challenges within the mental health workforce across the United States⁷. Wisconsin faces critical workforce shortages in state-run psychiatric hospitals and crisis systems, according to NRI's report, which identified 41 states with such shortages, though a breakdown was not provided. These settings do employ social workers. This committee should act swiftly to advance AB 80 forward for a vote in both houses of the Wisconsin Legislature and ensure its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I welcome any further questions.

The Americans for Autism Advocacy Board of Directors consisting of:

Mr. Kyle Maichle, President and Board Chairman, Sun Prairie, WI

Mr. Nicholas Glad, Board Secretary, Formerly of Milwaukee, now in Albuquerque, NM.

Ms. Jacqueline Pickrell, Treasurer, Albuquerque, NM.

Ms. Emily Smedlund, At-Large 1 Board Member, Cary, Illinois

Mr. Daniel C. Loftis, At-Large 2 Board Member, Titusville, FL

⁶ <https://ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocNum=2473&GAID=18&DocTypeID=HB&LegId=160269&SessionID=114&GA=104>

⁷ <https://www.nri-inc.org/media/tghpz5uu/smha-workforce-shortages-2023.pdf>