

Support The OT Interstate Licensure Compact

States Handling Access to Reciprocity for Employment (SHARE) Act: H.R. 1310

Occupational therapy practitioners have had difficulties in obtaining multiple state licenses to practice due to administrative burdens. If a practitioner relocates to another state or would like to practice across state lines in-person or via telehealth, they must complete the full licensure or certification process again for any additional state. This process includes additional applications, proof of eligibility, and duplicative fees. In addition, this repeated process could take months to complete. During this time, qualified practitioners are unable to practice in the state in which they have applied. These burdens hinder the ability to provide quality services and restrict consumer access in underserved and rural communities.

Professional interstate compacts, like the Occupational Therapy Compact, are entities consisting of state licensing bodies that facilitate the ability of licensed professionals to provide their services in multiple states without having to complete the time-consuming and costly effort to practice in every jurisdiction. In many professions, licensed professionals may apply to a compact where states will recognize the professional's state credentials and enable that professional to practice in additional states. Compacts often result in reducing the administrative burdens on licensed professionals while increasing services and options to consumers. Many medical providers, including PTs, have established a compact to allow providers — once they have been granted compact privileges — to work in multiple states. This is especially important in helping to address the medical provider shortage in many rural and underserved areas.

The bipartisan States Handling Access to Reciprocity for Employment (SHARE) Act (H.R. 1310), introduced in the House of Representatives by Reps. Tracey Mann (R-KS) and Joe Neguse (D-CO), will increase access to health services, like occupational therapy, particularly for patients in underserved or rural areas, while allowing states to protect their authority to determine who is eligible to practice in the state.

The SHARE Act would simply make a technical correction by allowing a state licensing or certification entity to share the fact that a criminal background check was completed with the interstate compact commission. Fixing this technicality will expand the reach of health care professionals, improving access to medical specialists, and leveraging the use of new medical technologies, such as telehealth, would benefit every participating state in the compact.

The country will be facing a shortage crisis for years, but in order to obtain tomorrow's solutions, there must be action today.