



This Bill Analysis reflects the contents of the bill as it was presented in committee.

# HOUSE BILL 791: Licensed Counselors Interstate Compact.

2021-2022 General Assembly

<b>Committee:</b>	House Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	<b>Date:</b>	July 20, 2021
<b>Introduced by:</b>	Reps. Wheatley, Szoka, Martin, Adcock	<b>Prepared by:</b>	Jason Moran-Bates Staff Attorney
<b>Analysis of:</b>	PCS to First Edition H791-CSBCa-48		

**OVERVIEW:** *The Proposed Committee Substitute House Bill 791 would make North Carolina a member of the Counseling Compact, an interstate licensure compact for licensed professional counselors and appropriate \$20,000 in nonrecurring funds for the 2021-22 fiscal year to assist with the administrative costs.*

**BILL ANALYSIS:** Section 1 of the bill would create a new Article (24A: Professional Counseling Licensure Compact), which would do the following:

- **G.S. 90-349.1. Purpose** would set forth the purpose of the bill.
- **G.S. 90-349.2. Definitions** would create definitions for "active duty military," "adverse action," "alternative program," "continuing competence/education," "Counseling Compact Commission or Commission," "current significant investigative information," "data system," "encumbered license," "encumbrance," "executive committee," "home state," "impaired practitioner," "investigative information," "jurisprudence requirement," "licensed professional counselor," "licensee," "licensing board," "member state," "privilege to practice," "remote state," "rule," "single-state license," "state," "telehealth," "and unencumbered license."
- **G.S. 90-349.3. State participation in the Compact** would require member states in the compact to establish education and exam requirements for professional counselors and have a process to investigate complaints. They would also have to participate in the Compact Commission's (Commission) data system, notify the Commission of adverse action against licensees, conduct background checks of licensees, and allow counselors licensed in other Compact states to practice in the member state.
- **G.S. 90-349.4 Privilege to practice** would individuals seeking to practice in remote states to hold a home state license, notify the Commission that they are seeking to practice in remote states, pay fees, meet continuing education requirements, and follow all laws and regulations in all state in which they practice.
- **G.S. 90-349.5. Obtaining a new home state license based on a privilege to practice** would allow counselors who moved to obtain a home state license in their new state of residence.
- **G.S. 90-349.6. Active duty military personnel or their spouses** would allow active duty military personnel and their spouses to retain a home state designation while actively serving.
- **G.S. 90-349.7. Compact privilege to practice telehealth** would require a member state to allow counselors licensed in any other member state to practice in that state via telehealth.

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- **G.S. 90-349.8. Adverse action** would allow remote states to take action against counselors that are licensed in a different state. Home states would be required to conduct investigations based on a remote state's report to the same extent they would any other misconduct. A license suspension or revocation in a home state would result in the counselor losing the privilege to practice in any other member state.
- **G.S. 90-349.9. Establishment of the Counseling Compact Commission** would establish a commission to administer the Compact. It would set forth the powers and duties, meeting requirements, financing, and executive committee rules for the Commission.
- **G.S. 349.10. Data System** would establish a data system for the Compact. Each member state would be required to report identifying information, licensure data, adverse actions, nonconfidential information related to alternative program participation, licensure denials, and investigative information to the system. All reported information would be shared among all member states.
- **G.S. 90-349.11 Rulemaking** would establish rulemaking procedures and notice and comment requirements for rules promulgated by the Commission.
- **G.S. 90-349.12. Oversight; dispute resolution; enforcement** would require each member state's government to enforce the provisions of the Compact. If a member state defaulted on its obligations to the Compact and refused to cure the default after written notice, it could be terminated from further participation in the Compact. The Compact must adopt rules to govern dispute resolution between member states and between member and non-member states.
- **G.S. 90-349.13. Date of implementation of Counseling Compact Commission and associated rules; withdrawal; amendment** would make the Compact effective on the date the tenth member state enacts it. Member states can withdraw by repealing the enacting legislation. The compact can be amended by amending legislation being enacted in all member states.
- **G.S. 90-349.14. Construction and severability** would construe the Compact liberally and allow any provisions struck down by a court to be severed from the remaining provisions of the Compact.
- **G.S. 90-349.15. Binding effect of Compact and other laws** would clarify that laws of member states which conflict with the Compact are superseded to the extent of that conflict. All laws and rules of the Compact are binding on all member states.

Section 2 of the bill would appropriate \$20,000 in nonrecurring funds to the North Carolina Board of Licensed Mental Health Counselors to assist with the administrative costs of this act.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** The Compact provisions would be effective when the tenth member state enacts the Compact. The North Carolina Board of Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors must report to the Revisor of Statutes when the tenth member state has enacted the Compact. The remainder of the bill is effective when it becomes law.

**BACKGROUND:** The model legislation for the Counseling Compact was drafted in December 2020. As of July 19, 2021, two states (Georgia and Maryland) have enacted the Compact. Legislation is pending in Tennessee and Nebraska.