

April 13, 2023

The Honorable Jesse Sumner
Chairman
House Labor & Commerce Committee
120 Fourth Street, Room 3
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: Letter of Opposition - HB 149, Nurse Licensure Compact
The Honorable Jesse Sumner:

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals AFT Local 5017 to encourage Alaska to reject to HB 149, the “Multistate Nurse Licensure Compact.”

OFNHP represents more than 6,000 RNs and health professionals throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington. We stand in ardent solidarity with our nursing colleagues in Alaska, especially as it relates to this issue. The nurses in our union feel just as passionate about patient safety as Alaskan nurses and citizens, which is why we’re voicing our concern(s) on their behalf.

After careful review and consideration, we believe the risks of joining the Nurse Licensure Compact are too great for the State of Alaska. These risks include a loss of state sovereignty, threats to public safety, erosion of quality patient care and weakened standards for the practice of nursing, and a loss of state revenue.

A major argument by proponents of the Compact is the change will help Alaska deal with its nursing shortage. Unfortunately, there is no meaningful evidence to suggest that joining the Nurse Licensure Compact would help. The nursing shortage exists nationwide, and joining the Compact will not suddenly nor magically bring a flood of nurses to Alaska to fill vacancies at needy facilities. **Furthermore, the Compact is a door that swings both ways—joining the Compact will likely contribute to a nurse shortage when Alaska resident nurses decide to leave the state and become travelers.**

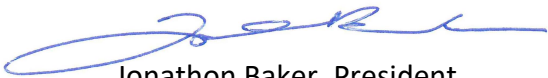
Alaska currently enjoys complete autonomy over the regulation of the profession of nursing, allowing local experts to make local decisions that are best for your state. Created by a private Chicago-based trade association, the Nurse Licensure Compact is administered by a powerful “Interstate Commission” with the sole authority to adopt binding rules and assess payments from the states. **If Alaska adopts the Nurse Licensure Compact, Alaska will cede it’s right to determine and enforce nurse licensing standards that your state’s policymakers have determined are necessary to protect the public.** In many cases, it also undermines local control over practice decisions such as adhering to Alaska’s continuing education requirements for nurses.

The Nurse Licensure Compact undermines the mission of the Alaska Board of Nursing by posing a threat to public safety and health. **The Nurse Licensure Compact has no mechanism to identify or monitor nurses coming into a state to practice from another participating Compact state. There are worrisome inconsistencies between states regarding standards for nurses –** including for initial and continuing education, criminal offenses, and disciplinary action. The Compact would allow out-of-state nurses practicing in Alaska to circumvent your State's high standards, jeopardizing the high-quality patient care that Alaskans currently receive. These factors altogether hinder the State's ability to protect the public.

Joining the Compact means Alaska will be forced to abandon a rigorous licensing and vetting process and become totally dependent on other Compact states to weed out so-called "bad actors" **who obtain a license under cloudy circumstances, including fraudulent diplomas and transcripts which came to light, in January 2023, with the U.S. Department of Justice's "Operation Nightingale."** Additionally, Alaska will not be able to identify a nurse with a Compact license with a pending disciplinary action in another state.

For all the above reasons and to help ensure the protection of all patients in Alaska **OFNHP strongly encourages Alaska to reject to HB 149, the "Multistate Nurse Licensure Compact."**

Respectfully,



Jonathon Baker, President
Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals
AFT Local 5017, AFL-CIO