

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Senator David Wilson

Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 74

“An Act relating to an interstate physical therapy licensure compact; relating to the licensure of physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, occupational therapists, and occupational therapy assistants; and providing for an effective date.”

Since the 1950s the number of licensed occupations has risen from five percent of the workforce to twenty-five percent. Navigating the various state licensing requirements, rules, regulation, and fee structure can present significant challenges for workers. To address these challenges, states and professions have turned to occupational licensure interstate compacts. These compacts create reciprocal professional licensing practices between states, while ensuring the quality and safety of services and safeguarding state sovereignty.

An interstate compact is a contract between two or more states. It carries the force of statutory law and allows states to perform a certain action, observe a certain standard, or cooperate in a critical policy area. Alaska is currently a member of twenty-eight interstate compacts.

SB 74 enacts the Interstate Physical Therapy Compact (PTC). The PTC utilizes a mutual recognition approach: eligible physical therapists and physical therapy assistants in compact member states currently issuing and accepting compact privileges have the option of obtaining a compact privilege in other member states. A licensee providing physical therapy in a remote state, such as Alaska, under the compact privilege must function within the laws and regulations of the remote state, thus improving healthcare availability to Alaskan residents, while ensuring those services are provided at the highest standard. The PTC became official in 2017 and has been adopted by 34 states. Twenty-eight states are issuing and accepting compact privileges and six states have enacted compact legislation but are not yet issuing or accepting compact privileges.

Compacts represent the only mechanism in the U.S. Constitution by which the states themselves can alter the fundamental dynamics of their relationship without the intervention of federal government. Unlike other means of interstate cooperation, compacts both create a state-based solution to regional or national problems and effectively retain policy control over certain interstate matters for the future. The only way for states to preserve their authority over interstate problems may be to share their sovereignty and work together cooperatively through interstate compacts. Without compacts, federal involvement in traditional state policy areas is a serious threat. Senate Bill 74 is necessary to encourage the interstate practice of physical therapy and to protect state sovereignty. I respectfully ask for your support of this legislation.

Please contact Jasmin Martin in my office at (907)465-8165 or by email at Jasmin.Martin@akleg.gov for more information.

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