

# Nevada State Board of **NURSING**

September 30, 2015

Re: The Nurse Licensure Compact

Dear Nursing Stakeholder,

Advances in technology along with an increasingly mobile nursing workforce and patient population have created the necessity for breaking down unnecessary barriers to interstate nursing practice. The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) creates a system that allows nurses to practice freely among participating states while still allowing states to retain their autonomy through enforcement of their nurse practice act. This interstate compact has the ability to remove the licensure barrier to telehealth practice for more than 4.5 million nurses.

Health care is at a pivotal time in the evolution of telehealth. This year and in recent years, we have seen hundreds of telehealth bills in more than 44 states all with the goal of enabling telehealth. Given the mobility of society and the capabilities which advanced technology brings, telehealth is proliferating at a tremendous rate. The current health care environment begs the question, “How do regulators facilitate cross-border practice of nursing whether physically or via telehealth and ensure that critical systems are in place to keep patients safe?”

You may be aware that Nevada attempted to pass the NLC during three previous Legislative Sessions more than 10 years ago. In 2005, the Nevada State Board of Nursing (NSBN) voted to suspend efforts to join the NLC because not all of the compact states at the time required that licensees undergo criminal background checks (CBC) as a requirement of licensure. NSBN statistics have shown that CBCs provide critical information necessary to make sound licensure decisions to support the Board’s mission to protect the public. The dilemma was to resolve how to address the changing healthcare advances and still meet our mission of public protection.

An Enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact (ENLC) was approved by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing on May 4, 2015, at a Special Delegate Assembly meeting. This new compact includes the Uniform Licensure Requirements (including CBCs) in the text of the compact itself. Subsequently, the NSBN voted during its July Business Meeting to seek support to introduce the ENLC during Nevada’s 2017 Legislative Session. The Board’s rationale for supporting the ENLC is to ensure protection for Nevada’s citizens while eliminating redundancy and duplicative regulatory processes and unnecessary fees. The Board believes this new compact improves patient access to licensed nursing care especially during a disaster or other times of great need and it assists military spouses by decreasing the amount of time, paperwork, and costs necessary to begin to immediately practice nursing upon relocation. Although Board staff issue nursing licenses within 2.5 days, the compact would allow nurses to practice

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immediately upon arrival in Nevada as long as they have met the stringent Uniform Licensure Requirements and have been issued a compact license in their state of residence.

Research tells us that nearly 75% of Nevada nurses are only somewhat aware or not at all aware of the NLC, although over 90% of nurses are either in favor of or neutral about the possibility of Nevada joining the compact. A higher percentage of employers, 67%, are familiar or very familiar with the NLC and more than 2/3 of Nevada employers believe that there would be advantages for their organizations if Nevada joined the compact. This data speaks to the need for clear and concise education on the compact for Nevada nurses and employers. In addition, Nevada's citizens would benefit from learning about the compact's benefits to health care access and how the compact ensures safe nursing care.

We are most interested in providing this important education for interested audiences across our state. Please call me or my assistant, Gail Trujillo, at (888) 590-6726, to schedule a short, informative presentation in the near future. Thank you for considering inviting us.

Sincerely,



Debra Scott, MSN, RN, FRE  
Executive Director  
Nevada State Board of Nursing