



## Homecare & Hospice Association of Utah

To: Utah State Legislature

From: HHAU  
1002 Parkway Drive  
North Salt Lake, UT  
84054

Date: 01/20/2022

Re: Occupational Therapy Interstate Compact (HB154)

Dear Legislature:

The Homecare & Hospice Association of Utah is supportive of the request for an Occupational Therapy Compact and ask that you provide passage of HB154, sponsored by Representative Ferry and Senator Bramble.

Similar compact agreements for other healthcare professions, including Nursing, Physical Therapy, and Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, have been critical to the safe staffing and provision of services to Utah's residents.

Even without consideration of the present COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, demand for healthcare workers in Utah is far greater than supply, and the situation is projected to become even more dire given an aging population that is expected to double between 2015 and 2065 (10.2% to 20.3% of the population).<sup>1</sup>

Compacts still require an active license from a compact state in addition to a criminal background check, helping to protect recipients of care while getting clinicians working in Utah much more quickly than they would otherwise be able to through the new licensure process. Unfortunately, many clinicians who would otherwise provide temporary help to a State decide not to because of unique, slow, and/or rigorous licensing requirements. Anecdotally, many clinicians who do come to work temporarily in Utah fall in love with the State and our people and decide never to leave.

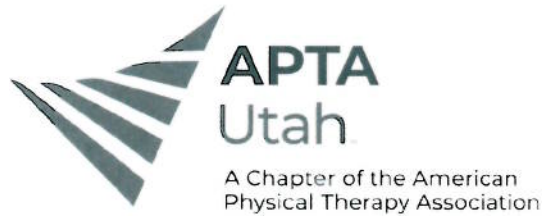
Thank you for your consideration and support of HB154. Please do not hesitate to contact our Association with any questions that you might have about how participation in the Occupational Therapy Compact might specifically benefit the Homecare and Hospice industries in Utah.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Hansen".

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<sup>1</sup> <https://gardner.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections-Brief-Final.pdf>



Dear Legislators,

The American Physical Therapy Association Utah Chapter (APTA Utah) is writing to express our strong support for HB #154 OT Interstate Compact Bill. APTA Utah recently sought to join a Physical Therapy Compact in 2017. This was SB 248 Physical Therapy License Compact. As the legislation went through committee and eventually the House and Senate Legislators were supportive and aware of the need for PTs and PTAs to be able to have portability and practice within those states that were participating in the Physical Therapy compact.

A compact for PT and professions like OT improve access for these professionals and their patients. It permits those holding the license to continue to utilize their license as they may have

- Allows for greater ability to offer telehealth services.
- Providers who travel to provide care.
- Temporary living situations.
- Those who live in rural communities and near the borders of other states.
- Are members of the military or have a loved one who is a member of the military
- Allows for greater ability to offer telehealth services.

The Physical Therapy Compact has been in place for several years and it has been very useful to members who choose to participate in it. They are able to continue to practice with their local license as long as they meet certain criteria in the state they are practicing in. These are the benefits that the PT Compact has for PTs, PTAs and patients. You can find out more at [www.ptcompact.org](http://www.ptcompact.org)

- Improves continuity of care
- Improves portability for military spouses
  - Improves access to physical therapy providers
  - Increases choice of physical therapy providers
  - Facilitates alternate delivery methods (Telehealth)
    - Simplifies/speeds up the current process
    - Addresses portability & barriers to access
    - Practice of physical therapy occurs in the state where the patient/client is located at the time of the patient/client encounter

We are strongly encouraging you to support HB #154 and give OTs and OTAs the opportunity to continue to practice now and for the future. Physical Therapy has a Compact that has been very beneficial. Speech, Language, and Pathology also has a Compact that has been well received. Occupational Therapists and OT Assistants are now ready to join the other rehab professions in practicing their profession across states and within a compact.

Thank you for all your time and efforts. We are happy to answer any questions you have.

Sincerely,

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### **What is occupational therapy?**

Occupational therapists (OTs) receive master's or doctorate degrees and receive much of the same training as physical therapists and also psychologists, but focus more on helping people's health capacity meet the demands of ALL activities in their daily life. Occupational therapists work in schools, early intervention, critical care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health, outpatient adult and child development clinics, mental/behavioral health facilities, industrial ergonomics/consulting, correctional facilities, and many other settings. Occupational therapists are at the same level as physician assistants and physical therapists, and they can supervise teams of occupational therapy assistants (an associate's degree), who carry out a supervising OT's treatment plans.

### **What is the problem with current licensure?**

There are multiple issues to the current system.

- Occupational therapists throughout the country must currently undergo significant effort to practice in any state they wish to practice. Licensure applications can take up to 6 months to process, incur hundreds of dollars in fees, require significant maintenance, including continuing education in each licensure state.
- For example, an OT in the four corners region may need to maintain four or more licenses to see patients in multiple states within 40 miles of each other.
- Another example: A patient came from outside Utah to receive our excellent emergent care services, the bulk of their OT services would be in the months after discharge but their Utah OT cannot continue their plan of care once the patient returns home.

Recent legislative efforts have made it possible for OTs to more easily come into Utah to practice. However, the above situations are not solved by this legislation, because Utah OTs are not currently permitted to follow patients outside the state of Utah.

### **An Interstate Licensure Compact is the Solution**

Most healthcare professions have very effectively solved these problems through the creation of an interstate licensure compact, including physicians, nurses, physical therapists, EMTs, psychologists, and more. This compact is modeled after time-tested systems in other professions.

An interstate licensure compact would:

- Allow licensed occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants to practice across state lines (e.g., telehealth)
- Improve consumer access to occupational therapy
- Enhance mobility of occupational therapy practitioners (e.g., spouses of relocating military families, staff of travel therapy companies)
- Improve continuity of care
- Address competition issues raised by the Federal Trade Commission and others
- Preserve and strengthen the state licensure system
- Enhance the exchange of licensure, investigatory, and disciplinary information between member states

Please **Support H.B. 154** and help pass the Occupational Therapy Interstate Licensure Compact!