

Duplicates/Conflicts with/Companion to/Relates to:
Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

HB 81 enters New Mexico into the Occupational Therapy Licensure Interstate Compact which seeks to improve access to occupational therapy services and regulatory oversight of occupational therapists by facilitating interstate practice and enhancing interstate licensing board collaboration.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

There is a need to increase in the number of occupational therapists practicing in New Mexico, especially within the rural areas. Overall, the American Occupational Therapy Association and New Mexico Occupational Therapy Association support the compact as a means of improving access and continuity of care, as well as mobility of therapists (particularly military families).

However, there is no existing data within the profession to support these assumptions, particularly in rural areas. Initial data does however suggest that compacts helped fill crucial nursing shortages in New Mexico during the Covid 19 pandemic.

There are also concerns that OTs working along the border of other states in the compact may actually leave NM to work in states that provide higher compensation. In addition, the provision for telehealth from providers outside of the state may decrease the usage of in person providers in New Mexico, thereby decreasing revenue for state facilities and decreasing employment opportunities in the state for our graduates.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

There is some concern about the impact of individuals choosing telehealth options over in person therapy. Otherwise, it would be anticipated that therapists moving to the state to provide services would be appropriately trained.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

There needs to be a clear system to support verification of licensing, license renewal and continuing education, as well as insuring the absence of derogatory actions across states. There is a plan to create a nationwide clearinghouse, but it is still under development. Clear guidelines need to be created regarding the ability of someone with a license from another state to supervise fieldwork students and COTAs.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

TECHNICAL ISSUES

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

ALTERNATIVES

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

There will continue to be a lack of occupational therapists in many specialties, such as early intervention and hand therapy, and in rural communities. The University of New Mexico has launched an initiative to double the number of graduates from the health science programs, including occupational therapy. This initiative will require increased funding for space, faculty, equipment and a possible bridge program. And this will take a number of years to make an impact. Therefore, a combination of the new initiative and the compact will likely be needed to meet the needs of New Mexico residents.

AMENDMENTS