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Testimony before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Labor and Energy

Prepared Statement of the Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities

Nevada faces significant mental health workforce shortages.

- The Guinn Center released a policy brief in October 2014 titled, *Nevada's Mental Health Workforce: Shortages and Opportunities*.
- Currently, 1.4 million people in Nevada (53 percent) reside in an area designated as a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area by the Federal Health Resources and Services Administration.
- Nevada ranks 50th in the U.S. in the number of psychiatrists per 100,000 people, and 47th in the U.S. in the number of psychologists per 100,000 people. Shortages are particularly pronounced in rural areas.
- The current pipeline of graduates from Nevada public and private colleges has been inadequate to meet demand.
- Nevada Department of Health and Human Services has high vacancy rates for psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses, which has increased reliance on contract staff.

Expediting licensing would help address shortages.

- While health licensing boards have endorsement processes for professionals coming from other states, significant barriers exist in processing time, exam requirements, years of experience requirements, and training requirements.
- Creating a universal timeline to review endorsement applications can provide out-of-state professionals more certainty when they are offered a job in Nevada and can make Nevada more attractive in recruitment efforts.

AB 89 provisions to expedite licensing could be expanded.

- Provisions affecting people connected to the military:
 - Section 9 of AB 89 provides an expedited timeframe for endorsements for any profession for active members of the military, veterans, and their spouses.
 - These timeframes could also apply to people not connected to the military.
- Provisions for health professions:
 - Sections 13, 30.5, and 33 of AB 89 create expedited endorsement procedures for medical doctors, osteopathic physicians, and podiatrists.
 - These provisions affect all professionals in these fields, not just people connected to the military.
 - SB 68 has similar provisions that apply to all health professions with workforce shortages.

- Conclusion: Provisions in AB 89 to expedite licensing could be expanded to apply to all health professions with shortages, as is being proposed in SB 68. In addition, timelines proposed for endorsements for veterans could be expanded to all applicants.

AB 89 provisions to address barriers to receiving a social worker license could be expanded.

- Section 36 of AB 89 allows active members of the military, veterans, and their spouses to receive a provisional license to be a social worker if they are licensed in a state with requirements that are not substantially equivalent to Nevada.
- Conclusion: Nevada's requirements can be streamlined to accept training and supervision requirements in other states so all persons (not just those connected to the military) can obtain a full license instead of a provisional license.

Interstate compacts can achieve reciprocity more efficiently than individual agreements proposed in AB 89.

- Section 12 of AB 89 allows regulatory bodies in health professions to create reciprocity agreements with other states. This agreement would allow a provider to practice concurrently in Nevada and other states.
- It is unlikely the State's licensing boards would use this provision. Nevada's licensing boards do not have the resources to negotiate separate agreements with multiple states since they are supported solely by fees and have limited staff.
- It would be inefficient for Nevada to try to broker agreements one state at a time.
- Joining interstate compacts can be a more efficient way to implement reciprocity since various states sign onto the same agreement.
- Two interstate compacts are pending before the Legislature: SB 251- Interstate Medical Licensure Compact and SB 299- Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact.
- Conclusion: The Legislature should consider joining interstate compacts in addition to allowing boards to negotiate reciprocity agreements with other states.

See full report: *Nevada's Mental Health Workforce: Shortages and Opportunities*
<http://guinncenter.org/publications/policy-reports/#SustainingNevada>

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