

February 2, 2024

Madame Chairs, Ranking Members and Members of the Assembly and Senate:

A 24-year-old student originally from Wyoming but pursuing her studies in New York, comes to her Student Health Center complaining of fever and a sore throat. The health center provider examines her and determines via a rapid test that she has Strep throat. The provider prescribes Amoxicillin, which the patient begins right away and is told to come back if she has any worsening symptoms.

One week later the provider receives a message from the patient. She is home in Wyoming for winter break and has developed a rash all over that is uncomfortable and itchy. Since the provider is not licensed in Wyoming, they message the student to go to a local Urgent Care. The student writes back that she is 2 hours from the nearest Emergency Room and there are no local Urgent Care facilities open.

The provider is unable to offer any additional advice. However, if they could, they would schedule a telehealth appointment with the student, see the typical rash of an Amoxicillin reaction (drug eruption) and simply have the student stop the Amoxicillin and take Benadryl for the itch.

A 30-year-old from Texas is attending graduate school in New York City. For the first time in their life, they feel like they can truly be themselves. They have a new boyfriend and have sought out counseling at their Student Health Center to help process some of their issues related to their family's rejection of their gender identity and sexual orientation. Their family was never supportive of them seeking any mental health help. They are currently receiving medication from the psychiatrist at Student Health. They go home for their little sister's college graduation and when they arrive in Texas, they realize they left their medications back in their apartment in New York City. They call Student Health to schedule an appointment with the psychiatrist but are told that since the Psychiatrist is not licensed in Texas, they are unable to assist. They are advised to seek assistance locally from a provider, or at an Urgent Care. Since the student does not want to disclose to their family that they are seeking mental health services, they forego refilling their medications and suffer a relapse of their symptoms.

My name is Dr. Marcy Ferdschneider, and I am the Assistant Vice President of Student Health on Haven, the student health center on the Medical Center Campus of Columbia University in the City of New York. I am double board certified in both Internal Medicine and Pediatrics. While these scenarios do not depict actual student cases, they are composites of many stories from many students I have encountered in my almost 25 years of working in College Health.

It is these stories, and countless others, that compel me to support New York State to join the Interstate Medical License compact. The scenarios above demonstrate how fractured care can lead to increased costs and over-burdening of the system. These stories both highlight overly simplistic, but true to life, situations that could be easily resolved with the ability for medical providers to be more easily licensed in other states.

New York State is home to almost 300 Institutions of Higher Education, whose mission is to educate the over 1 million students enrolled. We know that physical health, mental health, and overall well-being are essential for academic success.

STUDENT HEALTH ON HAVEN

There was no greater example of the need for interstate licensing than during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In March 2020, College Health professionals nationwide had to figure out how to adapt to a new way of serving our patients via telehealth, which we had limited experience with before the pandemic. As our students dispersed to their home states, they continued to depend on their college health centers for guidance and advice, for the continuity of the care they had been receiving from us, and for the mental health support that was readily available to them, and much needed during those stressful initial months. We quickly realized that we needed systems in place to be able to serve our patients in their home states until they could be connected to local care. By using the data we had available to us, we were able to determine the top states where our students were from and apply for licenses in those states, making sure to meet the specific requirements of each and every application. We also assigned staff the onerous task of keeping track of which states were allowing interstate care to take place without licensing. These processes were time-consuming, costly, and unsustainable.

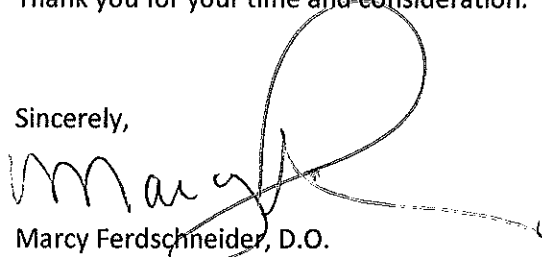
College health professionals are uniquely positioned to provide high quality healthcare to students. This means we take care to understand the developmental trajectory of the population whether they be undergraduate, graduate, doctoral students, or all of the above. We understand the world of the learner – the dynamics of the learning environment, the impacts of the social experience, and experience of living away from home, for many for the first time. For many of our student-patients, it is the first time they are living on their own, navigating their own healthcare, and in their words “adulting.” All of this is hard enough for our students, but as things stand currently, they not only have to learn how to navigate the healthcare system available to them in New York, but because of the transient nature of their experience, they also need to have a secondary plan for when they travel away from campus.

Having the Interstate Medical License Compact available to medical providers in New York State will streamline the process for our medical providers to obtain the necessary licenses so that they can provide the care that their patients need when they are out of state, for whatever reason.

The stories in my testimony are fictional but are based on the experiences of thousands of students I have encountered during my time as a physician and as an administrator working in College Health. With so many young people struggling to access healthcare that meets their needs, I urge you to take this opportunity to support this bill for the one million plus who choose New York State as the place to meet their academic goals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Marcy Ferdtschneider, D.O.

Assistant Vice President | Student Health on Haven
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