

April 12, 2021

Senator Novelle E. Francis Jr.  
Chairman, Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services  
Capitol Building  
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

Dear Chairman Francis and Committee members,

On behalf of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (“NCSBN”), I am writing to voice my support for bill 34-0040, which authorizes the U.S. Virgin Islands to join 35 states and territories in enacting the Nurse Licensure Compact (“NLC”). The NLC allows registered nurses and licensed practical nurses to have one multistate license in their primary state of residence and practice in other compact states under that one license. The NLC is a vital tool to address nursing shortages as well as the fight against COVID-19.

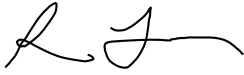
The NLC enables nurses to **immediately** cross borders and provide services to fill gaps in care. This is an important tool to help alleviate the nursing shortage in the U.S. Virgin Islands as well as in times of a disaster, like hurricanes, when healthcare staffing is strained due to increased patient volume and loss of healthcare workers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses in NLC participating states were able to immediately cross state lines and treat patients. This mobile nurse workforce is vital to cover gaps in care, both during disasters and beyond.

The NLC has many patient safety provisions including 11 universal licensure requirements to ensure every nurse practicing under a compact license has been vetted and meets these statutory standards. A federal criminal background check is included in the licensure requirements. The U.S. Virgin Islands will likely need additional, FBI approved, language to implement federal criminal background checks for compact nurses.

The NLC has been operating for over 20 years and no state has ever repealed it. In fact, the compact has only continued to grow, and most recently, Guam became the 35<sup>th</sup> jurisdiction to enact the NLC.

The U.S. Virgin Islands can bring needed relief to its hospitals, nurses and patients by enacting the NLC. The NLC increases access to health care, protects patient safety and is a crucial tool to address nursing shortages. Thank you for taking the time to address this important piece of legislation.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RF' followed by a horizontal flourish.

Rebecca Fotsch, JD

Director, State Advocacy & Legislative Affairs, NCSBN