

Hello, my name is Rita Munro, and I am an LICSW working in Middlebury, Vermont.

Today, I am advocating for the Social Work Compact, representing the perspective of a licensed clinical social worker in private practice in a college town. Approximately one-third of my clients are college students, and interestingly, none of these students are local to Vermont.

Let me paint a brief picture of the diverse challenges my clients face. These stories have significant changes to protect their anonymity.

Lily, a freshman who hails from Idaho, navigating anxiety as a pre-med student struggling with perfectionism and excessive worry. Home breaks bring conflicts with her brother, who is on the spectrum and faces anger management challenges and sensory processing issues. Helping her stay as regulated and centered as possible in her family system is a key part of our work.

Rebecca, a senior from Massachusetts, has a long-standing OCD diagnosis, exacerbated during family breaks where there are few interruptions to compulsive behavior. She recently lost a close acquaintance to a death on campus and dealt with the tragic deaths of two other Middlebury students, one on campus and another in a domestic violence incident near her hometown.

Abraham, a thriving sophomore from Philadelphia, faces the challenges of being a gay man at college, struggling to form healthy partnerships with peers and partners, all the while feeling like an outsider due to his sexuality.

Imogen, a sophomore recovering from an eating disorder, is attending Middlebury from Seattle. She's one of the most diligent clients I've had the pleasure of working with, and is so responsible in keeping a whole team informed of her progress. She collaborates with me, the health center on campus, her pediatrician, and two therapists in her home state to maintain her recovery. Keeping our work consistent during travel, and especially food-centered holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas, is an essential part of her treatment plan.

I am passionate about the work I do with these students, often starting with them in their freshman or sophomore years and seeing them through graduation or beyond.

While I appreciate the flexibility that telehealth sessions have brought to our field during the COVID era, it has also underscored a significant challenge. The

current regulations prevent me from providing telehealth services to my out-of-state clients while they are away, even though these sessions could offer invaluable support during critical times.

This limitation poses an ethical dilemma, as these moments demand additional support aligned with their treatment plans. It's an opportunity to strengthen our therapeutic relationships, gain insights into family systems, and understand cultural dynamics at play.

I urge the approval of the Social Work Compact, which would enhance the quality of care we can provide to students and transitional adults, regardless of their location. Thank you for your time, consideration and thoughtfulness. I love being able to work in this state and being a part of the therapeutic community of social workers.