

My name is Linda Lai Nga Li, LICSW. I'm currently practicing in Burlington area. I'm also the past President of NASW and the current Committee Chair for their Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

I'm writing to submit my written testimony for the compact bill H.510.

As a person of color, a multilingual and multicultural social worker, I strongly support the passing of the compact bill. As you know, Vermont is a very white state, there are not many multilingual and multicultural social workers in the state. But we know the need is high. I know many Chinese speaking people seeks services, however, as far as I know, I'm the only one in the state. Not to mention other languages' need. To give you other examples, Nepali and Somali May May are in high demand, but we don't have providers speak those language in the state.

You may argue, the provider can use interpreter. Did you know Vermont has no standard or regulation of language interpreter? Also, private insurances don't reimburse for interpretation services.

We also know that seeing a provider who speaks your language and understands your culture is the best practice.

This bill will allow so many people have access to cultural responsive counseling and services. We know mental illness is a crisis right now. The demand for services is at an all-time high. Passing this bill will not only increase access but also address the health equity issue.

thank you

Linda