

CASE STUDY



Helping Modify State Licensure Questionnaires in 10 States

OVERVIEW

When Dr. Lorna Breen, then the director of the emergency room at New York Presbyterian Hospital’s Allen Hospital in Manhattan, fell into a deep depression in the early days of the COVID pandemic, she told her family of her fears that treatment would lead to the loss of her medical license. Lorna’s family believed her fear was unfounded, but Lorna was too afraid to seek help, and she took her own life on April 26, 2020.

In the months after her suicide, Lorna’s family was shocked to discover that she hadn’t been wrong: state licensing boards across the country require physicians, nurses, and other healthcare providers to disclose any current or past treatment for mental health issues. The threat of losing the career they love is a significant barrier to care for many medical professionals—who often face higher rates of depression than the general population. Determined to increase access to mental healthcare, Lorna’s family founded the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation.

Husch Blackwell's impact

The foundation’s efforts include examining mental health-related questions asked by state physician and nurse licensing boards and working with states to modify these questions. For example, instead of asking providers if they’ve ever received mental health treatment, the foundation recommends asking if a provider is currently receiving

Legal Team

Cormac T. Connor
Matthew Deutsch

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treatment and if it impacts his or her ability to provide patient care.

The foundation's CEO and co-founder—Lorna's brother-in-law—is a close friend of Husch Blackwell partner Cormac Connor and approached him in late 2023 for the firm's help in reviewing state licensure questions. Cormac and his team of Elicia Grilley Green, Matt Deutsch, and Jacob Huston have worked with the foundation to review and change questionnaires in 10 states across the country. Recently, after working with Missouri's Board of Nursing, the Husch Blackwell team helped make Missouri the third state in the nation to receive the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation's ALL IN Champions Challenge badge for licensing.

“We are incredibly grateful for Husch Blackwell's thoughtful and patient approach with state boards,” said CEO and co-founder J. Corey Feist. “We're so excited to progress for healthcare providers across the U.S.”

Congratulations to Cormac Connor on receiving Husch Blackwell's 2024 Pro Bono Impact Award during National Pro Bono Week, recognizing his efforts in the pro bono partnership with the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation (LBHF).