

2304 E. Burnside, Suite 106
Portland, Oregon 97214

February 2, 2012

Dear members of the House Committee on Health Care,

My name is Larry Conner. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor in Portland serving as the president of the Oregon Mental Health Counselors Association and the secretary of the Coalition of Oregon Professional Associations for Counseling and Therapy. I am writing this letter in support of HB 4127.

I am sure you will hear testimony that addresses that HB 4127 is an attempt to correct a mistake in the drafting of legislation regarding the Oregon Health Authority. Therefore, I will focus on only two issues that concern my professional organization.

First, the loss of the certification of independent mental health clinics has ended the internships of a significant number of interns who were working toward licensure as professional counselors, marriage and family therapists or clinical social workers. It is not easy to find a good placement as an intern. The training regimen for professional counselors, marriage and family therapists and social workers is dependent on having as many good quality internships with good quality supervision as possible. These independent clinics have served Oregon well as they have trained many interns who have developed into effective mental health professionals providing care to countless Oregonians who suffer from mental illness.

Second, we are concerned about how the lack of certification to receive insurance reimbursement reduces the number of available mental health providers especially in underserved rural areas. Interns used to work in these independent clinics providing mental health care to many suffering Oregonians and they are no longer able to do so. We know of at least one of the clinics that has been forced to close completely because of this lack of certification.

Please vote in favor of HB 4127 so that these independent clinics can continue to offer quality mental health care to Oregonians and so that countless interns over the years will be able to finish their training hours to become productive and effective providers of mental health care to vulnerable Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Larry Conner MA LPC
President, Oregon Mental Health Counselors Association
Secretary, Coalition of Oregon Professional Associations for Counseling and Therapy