

TO: The Senate Committee on Health Care and Human Services
FR: Larry Conner MA LPC, President of COPACT
DA: May 6, 2013
RE: Support for HB 2768 LCP and LMFT Licensing Alignment Bill



Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee:

The Coalition of Oregon Professional Associations of Counseling and Therapy (COPACT) represents Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs) across Oregon. **We are here today to testify in support of HB 2768, which we brought forward to modify our licensing statute.**

Both of these professions have been licensed to practice under Oregon Statute since 1991. Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists are highly trained Masters level mental health providers who offer psychotherapy services to individuals of all ages, families, couples, groups, and organizations throughout Oregon.

There are 3,500 LPCs, LMFTs and registered interns. We estimate that each week LPCs, LMFTs and registered interns work with well over 70,000 Oregonians seeking services in mental health clinics, private practices, colleges, hospitals, prisons, and rehabilitation agencies.

HB 2768 does two things: it makes the definitions of professional counseling and marriage and family therapy clearer and more enforceable by our licensure board, and it makes the time required for internship prior to licensure the same for Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists.

In 2009 the law governing our profession was revised substantially and is now a practice act. However, as the law has been implemented in the intervening years, it has become clear that some of the definitions need further revision to ensure clarity for both practitioners and the Board.

In Section 1 (2) we propose adding a definition of “clinical experience” to help clarify the term which appears in existing statute but has not been previously defined. In Section 1 (6) (a) and (7) (a) we update and simplify the definitions of “marriage and family therapy” and “professional counseling.” With the passage of this bill, practitioners will have clearer and easier to understand definitions, and the Board will be better able to enforce the practice act for LPCs and LMFTs.

HB 2768 applies only to Master’s level professional counselors and marriage and family therapists who provide diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. It does not apply to anyone without a Master’s degree in counseling or to anyone who does not diagnose or treat mental disorders. COPACT has consulted with the Executive Director of the Oregon Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists on the language proposed in this bill and it is our understanding they have no concerns.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2768, I ask your support for the bill and hope you will send it to the House Floor.