

TO: The Oregon House Health Care Committee
FR: Larry Conner MA LPC, President of COPACT
DA: March 13, 2013
RE: Support for HB 2737



Chair Greenlick 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. **I am writing today to testify in support of HB 2737, which will increase the availability of internships for LPCs and LMFTs and will increase the availability of mental health providers in underserved areas in Oregon.**

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 over 70,000 Oregonians seeking services in mental health clinics, private practices, colleges, hospitals, prisons, and rehabilitation agencies.

The loss of OHA certification of independent mental health clinics ended the internships of a significant number of interns who were working toward licensure as professional counselors or marriage and family therapists. It is not easy to find a good placement as an intern. The training regimen for professional counselors and marriage and family therapists 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.

We are also concerned about how the lack of certification for these clinics 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 OHA certification.

Please vote in favor of HB 2737 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.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2737, I ask your support for the bill and hope you will send it to the House Floor.