

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Portland State University
PO Box 751
1900 SW 4th Ave.
Portland, OR 97207-0751

To: House Committee on Education
From: Joel Lane, Associate Professor and Interim Department Chair of Counselor Education at Portland State University, Oregon Counseling Association Past President
Date: March 18th, 2019
Re: Support of HB 2941

Dear members of the House Committee on Education,

I am writing in support of House Bill 2941 requiring mental health provider training programs to plan for the recruitment and retention of diverse students. I am a faculty member and Interim Department Chair in the Department of Counselor Education at Portland State University, as well as the Past President of the Oregon Counseling Association. Through these roles, I am acutely aware of the need for a more diverse workforce of mental health providers.

One of the foremost issues in mental health fields today is the underutilization of psychotherapy by people of color and those with other minoritized identities. Research has demonstrated that people of color with mental health diagnoses are less likely to attend psychotherapy and more likely to receive pharmacotherapy than are white individuals with mental health diagnoses. Other studies have identified a lack of multicultural representation and awareness among mental health providers as the primary reason for this underutilization. I believe that House Bill 2941 would be a positive step toward addressing this issue by resulting in Oregon mental health provider programs developing intentional plans for recruiting and graduating more diverse providers.

I have seen firsthand through my work at PSU the positive impact of focused recruitment and retention of diverse students. As Oregon's premier access institution, PSU strives for equity, diversity, and inclusion to be central to all of our practices. Equity is embedded throughout PSU's Strategic Plan for 2016-2020. In recent years, PSU has expanded its Office of Global Diversity and Inclusion, enabling our institution to grow its recruitment of underserved students, establish community spaces on campus devoted to various racial and ethnic groups, and enact professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to improve their multicultural awareness and sensitivity. Our Diversity Action Council works to foster equity and social justice by reviewing programs, policies, and decision making that aid the university in its work to embed systemic and structural changes utilizing an equity lens and to serve the best interests of our diverse constituents. PSU also supports these efforts through the President's Equal Access Scholarship, which supports students from diverse backgrounds and experiences that are traditionally underrepresented in higher education. Because of these and other equity-focused efforts, PSU has the most diverse student body among all Oregon higher education institutions.

PSU's Counselor Education Department has undergone our own work to improve diverse representation among our students. Such efforts include systematically reviewing and revising

our admissions evaluation criteria to address potential bias, creating a counseling students of color affinity group, partnering with a local immigrant and refugee community organization for recruitment, and creating a departmental equity committee to review course content and provide resources to instructional faculty. While these efforts are in progress, we are already noticing improvements in the number of diverse students in our programs and in the learning environments in our classrooms. House Bill 2941 would allow other mental health provider training programs in Oregon to realize the same benefits that we have begun experiencing.

Passage of House Bill 2941 would lead to a more diverse workforce of mental health providers in Oregon. I hope you will join me in supporting House Bill 2941.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Lane', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joel Lane, PhD LPC NCC
Associate Professor
Interim Department Chair
Department of Counselor Education
Portland State University
P.O. Box 751
Portland, OR 97201
Tel: 503-725-4719
Email: lanejoel@pdx.edu