

I am a biracial, African-American, LMFT Intern in private practice in Portland, OR. I would like to voice my support for HB 2949. The current licensing board rules state that both LPCs and LMFTs are required to complete 2400 of supervised clinical experience and that LMFTs are required to have 1000 of their 2400 hours be with couples and families (these hours are notoriously hard to acquire in a timely fashion, especially in private practice). Rather than supporting interns, the licensing board tells LMFT interns that it will take them "ages" to get licensed due to the relational hour requirement. The intimidation and lack of support makes it difficult to remain motivated to stay in the field, however, I do so because my caseload is almost exclusively comprised of BIPOC clients who are relieved to have access to a counselor who understands their cultural contexts.

I strongly believe that a reduction in direct clinical hours required for full licensure would only serve to encourage more people who identify as BIPOC to not only enter the field, but stay within it. Completing 2400 hours of service does not guarantee competency, which I know is a concern that has been cited by those who oppose this bill- a search through the Disciplinary Report provided by the OBLPCT is a testimony to the fact that there are plenty of folks who will full licensure who have neglected to provide care in a competent manner.

In addition, also would like to see the title change from LMFT or LPC intern, to associate. The average consumer of mental health services does not understand the distinction between post-graduate interns and student interns. As a person who graduated from school years ago, it is frustrating to continually have to explain to prospective clients that the title of "intern" does not mean that I am inexperienced or unqualified to serve them. A title of LMFT Associate or LPC Associate would more accurately represent those of us who are finished with school and are currently pursuing our full licensure.

I stay in this field because I believe in it, and I also believe the field is in desperate need of change.