

## Testimony in Opposition to HB 2117

I am a Licensed Psychologist Associate, and I oppose HB 2117 for many reasons.

1. Oregon is facing a pandemic with unprecedented mental health impacts on vulnerable populations. **The Board of Psychology has tried unsuccessfully to sunset the Psychologist Associate license twice** (in about 2008 and 2014). We're in the middle of a pandemic. This is no time to try again to reduce mental health licensing options.
2. Instead of wasting legislators' time trying to eliminate a licensing option during this uniquely challenging time in history, **the Board of Psychology should be reevaluating their procedures to increase the number of Psychologist Associate licensees available to serve the increasing mental health needs of Oregonians.**
3. The American Psychological Association is responsible for accrediting our nation's psychology programs, and the APA is currently working to promote Master's level training programs by creating accreditation standards for Master's level programs. Their hope is to further advance Master's level licensure and practice of psychology in our nation to help meet the growing demand for mental health treatment. As of December 2020, the APA's Master's Accreditation Work Group submitted a final version of those accreditation standards for review, after two rounds of public comment (see link below). **Sunsetting Oregon's Master's level license is out of step with the direction that the field of psychology is going.**
4. Sunsetting the Psychologist Associate license will make it more challenging for the remaining Psychologist Associate licensees to get on insurance panels because sunseting the license could suggest to insurers that the license is outdated, even though it is being advanced by the APA as an increasing part of the future of psychology. Many Oregonians rely on insurance to pay for mental health treatment, and **increasing barriers to getting on insurance panels will inevitably reduce insured Oregonians' access to in-network mental health providers.**
5. Barriers to getting on insurance panels can have a devastating impact on existing Psychologist Associate licensees, many of whom work in small psychology practices. **This negative impact on Oregon's small businesses is an important aspect of sunseting the Psychologist Associate license.**
6. I attended the Board of Psychology's Strategic Planning Session on 14 November 2020, and during the public forum, I shared the reasons I disagreed with sunseting the Psychologist Associate license (see details below). I waited patiently for hours on a Saturday for the public forum at the end of the meeting, and I noted that I was not prepared to fully address this issue—I was the only person not from the Board to attend. If they have made efforts to engage input from stakeholders, it is clear they have not been effective—it's no wonder why. **The Board made no mention of this bill in their two newsletters to licensees since their November meeting.** Plus, **we are literally in a state of emergency**, in the middle of a pandemic that has had massive impacts on the public's mental health, **resulting in licensees being extremely busy** trying to meet the needs of many of the most vulnerable Oregonians who are struggling with their mental health like never before. **This bill is not an emergency measure. Trying to sunset this license at this time of massive impact on the healthcare field does not show respect for stakeholders or the legislative process.** I'm surprised they decided to continue pursuing this bill at this time.
7. I read the Board of Psychology's newsletters when they are published. **If I had been**

**informed of this bill through their two newsletters to licensees since their November meeting** (or if I had been contacted directly by the Board), **I would have submitted testimony in opposition earlier in this bill's process.**

**When I attended the Board of Psychology's Strategic Planning Session on 14 November 2020**, Board members stated two reasons they wanted to sunset the license: the public has sometimes been confused about the difference between a psychologist associate and a psychologist; and some people with a Master's degree in psychology have opted to get licensed through the Board for Licensed Professional Counselors, even though the counseling tradition is less fitting with their psychology training. During the public forum when I was invited to speak, **I politely shared my differing perspective** on the reasons that Board members stated earlier in their meeting. **I was the only person not from the Board to attend the meeting, and I noted that I was not prepared to fully address this issue.**

I explained that the public has sometimes been confused about differences even more important than the difference between a psychologist associate and a psychologist, such as the difference between a licensed provider and a "qualified mental health professional" (QMHP). One of the Psychologist Board members volunteered his agreement with me on that point, noting that he has family members who have repeatedly referred (mistakenly) to him as a Psychiatrist (who would have medical school training).

I also explained that as someone with a training background in clinical psychology, working under the Board of Psychology is the most fitting arrangement for me. If I were working instead under the Board for Licensed Professional Counselors, my continuing education and professional community would be from an unfamiliar tradition, and that would not be best for my continuing professional development.

I hope you will reject this bill. The Board of Psychology was unsuccessful both times they have tried to sunset this license in the past because there are compelling reasons to leave the license in place. Also, **I hope the Board will reexamine their approach** to the Psychologist Associate license, effectively engage stakeholders in the process, and look for ways to advance this license option in Oregon, just as the APA is advancing it nationwide. **I welcome the Board to contact me for my help** with that, especially after the pandemic, when stakeholders can have an opportunity to participate in the process.

Sincerely,  
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### Reference

American Psychological Association's Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation (2020, December). Master's accreditation update: A status update from the Master's Accreditation Work Group. *Commission on Accreditation (CoA) Update*. <https://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation/newsletter/2020/12/master-update>