



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Mental Health Regulatory Agency

Board of Psychology

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Senate Committee on Human Services Mental Health and Recovery

RE: House Bill 2117- Repeal of Board of Psychology's Authority to Issue Initial Psychologist Associate Licenses

Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Anderson, Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Board of Psychology, I am writing to provide additional information in support of HB 2117. This measure repeals the Board's authority to issue initial psychologist associate licenses, but maintains licensure standards and regulation for currently licensed psychologist associates. The 28 currently licensed psychologist associates will retain their licenses.

The mission of Board is to promote, preserve, and protect the public health and welfare by ensuring the ethical and legal practice of psychology. The Board consists of nine members: six licensed psychologists, and three members are from the general public, not associated with the profession. All members are appointed by the Governor to three-year terms and confirmed by the Senate. Decisions are made in open public meetings where guests are encouraged to attend.

The Board initially discussed the psychologist associate licensure item during its Strategic Planning Session held on November 9, 2019. The public notice for this meeting was posted and sent to all licensees via email on October 29, 2019. The meeting included a public forum where the public could address the Board with comments or concerns regarding Board potential legislation for 2021. As the publicly posted meeting minutes reflect, the "Board consensus is to move forward with a legislative concept that will sunset psychologist associate licensure in Oregon, but maintain current licensees." This decision was made well prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and was subsequently discussed during the March 13, 2020 under the "Legislative Concepts" agenda item, subsection "Psychologist Associate License Sunset" that was posted and sent to all licensees on March 2, 2020. During this meeting, which also included a public forum to address the Board, the Board officially voted to file the legislative concept which became HB 2117. The publicly posted meeting minutes clearly reflect this unanimous Board vote.¹ Subsequently, a pre-session filed bill, HB 2117 became available on OLIS in early January, 2021.

The Board has seen a reduced demand for the psychologist associate license since the introduction of other master's level licensure options, including licensed professional counselor (LPC), licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT), and licensed social worker. The Mental Health Regulatory Agency also administers the Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and

¹ Public meeting notices and minutes can be found on the [Board Meetings](#) webpage; notices are also published to the Oregon Transparency Program's [Public Meetings Calendar](#).

Therapists (BLPCT), which issues LPC and LMFT licenses. These license types have seen significant growth in recent years. According to a recent report released by the Oregon Health Authority², licensed counselors and therapists had most significant growth of all of Oregon's healthcare workforce, increasing by an average 10.4% per year in direct patient care FTE between 2018 and 2020.

To qualify for LPC or LMFT, a master's degree is required- this includes a master's degree in psychology- to meet the educational requirements of OAR 833-030-0011 (LPC) or OAR 833-040-0011 (LMFT). Removal of the psychologist associate license clearly does not leave professionals without other options. **In the last ten years, 36,699 LPC and LMFT licenses have been issued, while only 4 psychologist associate licenses have been issued during this time.**³ The Board continues to maintain standards, procedures, and materials needed to support an obsolete license category.

The total number of psychologist associate licensees has changed from 42 at year-end 2011 to just 28 remaining at year-end 2020, a 36% reduction over the past decade. Of the 28 psychologist associate licensees, 11% are inactive (non-practicing) status, 32% are semi-active (62 years or older and limited to 20 client contact hours per week), and 57% are on active status.

HB 2117 passed the House with unanimous support. We appreciate your time and consideration of this measure, and encourage you to vote in favor of HB 2117.

Respectfully,



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² [2020 Report: Oregon's License Health Care Workforce Supply](#). Published January 2021, Oregon Health Authority, Office of Health Analytics.

³ Of these four licenses issued, three were previously licensed out-of-state.