

Dear Behavioral Health Committee,

I applaud the Oregon legislature for working hard during these difficult times. Like you, I'm very concerned about the welfare of Oregonians as well as the practices of alternative and complementary practitioners. But I oppose HB 2394.

I agree with and thus quote the following testimony:

And from 28692.pdf and 29029.pdf

I have the following serious concerns about HB 2394:

1. A similar bill was introduced in 2017 and was tabled because there was a huge outcry against it — because we don't want or need more regulations and an oversight board.
2. The bill labels the current situation as an emergency situation and threat to public safety. But there has been no documentation that there has been a public safety threat.
3. Complementary and alternative healers don't practice medicine or mental health counseling and should not be regulated in the same way as medical and mental that counseling is regulated by professional boards. Most of us spend a great deal of time training initially and also spend a lot of time in continuing education.
4. It is not in an alternative healthcare provider's job description to assess, diagnose or treat a mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder.
5. This bill takes away the right of Oregonians to choose their own healthcare providers.
6. The definition of alternative well-being provider is too vague. Care givers, certain types of ministries, and other professions fall under the given definition.
7. Too many professions that have no relationship with each other have been lumped together into one category.
8. Alternative health care providers have no say as to who is to govern them.
9. There is no provision to put alternative healthcare providers on the governing boards.
10. The passage of this bill would put many Oregon healthcare practitioners out of work during difficult times.
11. We don't want to face this every few years – and have a better approach that 11 other states use as their model of legislation. Its formal name is the Oregon Consumer Access and right to Practice Complementary and Alternative Health Care Act. (Working name: Safe Harbor Exemption for short) Many other states are introducing or preparing to introduce this. It has guardrails that practitioners need to stay within and includes disclosure about what training and experience a practitioner has. If a practice/practitioner violates these, then there is legal recourse with laws that already are in place.
12. What is most concerning to me is that it seems this bill in effect would discriminate against any religious practices that are non-christian. This bill would severely limit Oregonians access to spiritual practices and their right to freedom in how they choose to practice their faith, and discriminates against smaller religions and spiritual practices by holding alternative practitioners to a different standard than priests, rabbis, etc.

and from 28943.pdf

I have also seen how many trained and licensed practitioners have done great damage because of their inherent lack of maturity and deeper personal issues, which generally go undetected by laws that regulate their fields.

There are many, many health and healing modalities that are impossible to measure and evaluate by any standard medical rubric because they rely on the wisdom and intuitive depth of the practitioners and clients. Some are ancient. Some are new.

Further, practitioners' skills range from poor to brilliant, and are determined by so much more than training. Many of the best practitioners are simply gifted naturally from birth or life experience with intuitive abilities that material scientists cannot measure. Some scientists cannot even perceive them. People like us have been around for thousands of years, improving people's lives in ways that the recipients of our services are able to absolutely know and appreciate, yet third parties would not have a clue.

Are there quacks and amateurs who can be harmful to people? Yes, always have been. But no institution is capable of discerning these things. Education, wisdom and word of mouth is what people must rely on. Laws restricting these kinds of services come out of ignorance, fear and cultural bias. Perhaps courses in professional ethics are the best we can do.

Please do not support this bill. It would create much more harm than the harm it portends to prevent.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sharon Swezey
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