

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to oppose the passage of HB 2493 requiring the licensing of 'Alternative Therapy' practitioners. This bill makes a fundamentally false assumption that all therapeutic well-being practices not recognised by an established church or other formally accredited teaching institution are dangerous, that they constitute an "emergency" situation and an immediate threat to "public peace, health, and safety." These practices have been providing help and comfort to people for many years, all across Oregon and all over the world. The sweeping claim that there is somehow suddenly an 'emergency' which could be addressed by some kind of licensing board is simply untrue.

The types of practices which would be impacted by this bill include a diverse mix of spiritual/religious, intuitive, energy-manipulation, psychometric, and life-coaching techniques which really have very little in common with one another. Some are part of non-christian religious tradition. Others are entirely secular. Many are a mixture of both. Just to name a few, this bill would effect the practice and teaching of such things as shamanism, psychic reading, cartomancy and other divinitory practices, meditation, reiki, biofeedback, hypnotherapy, sound therapy, and even comparatively more mundane practices such as non-violent communication training, peer counselling, and herbalism. Many of these practices do not have accredited 'schools' of learning where a practitioner can get a paper certification. It would thus be impossible for any board empanelled by the State of Oregon Health Licensing Office to have sufficient breadth of knowledge to make an accurate assessment of whether someone was a 'good practitioner' of a particular alternative therapy or not.

There are already protections in Oregon law for grievances against a 'bad practitioner' who commits ethical malpractice, misrepresentation, financial fraud, sexual abuse, physical abuse, or other criminal acts. This licensing law is an unnecessary duplication of existing protections for consumers of these services.

As many of the practices lumped under 'alternative therapy' are part of non-monotheist religious tradition, this bill also seriously infringes the right to free practice of religion guaranteed under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

HR 2493 is a badly written bill which can lend itself to gross abuses of law against those who provide services for the health and wellness of thousands of people across our State and should be rejected.