

Written Testimony Against House Bill 2493

Dear Legislators,

My name is Kerri Russell, and I am an energy healing practitioner, and certified instructor and facilitator. I offer individual sessions such as Reiki, and I teach classes for individuals who would like to learn the modality for their own well-being or become a practitioner.

Like you, I'm very concerned about the welfare of Oregonians as well as the practices of alternative care practices.

While I applaud the Oregon legislature for working hard during these difficult times, I have the following serious concerns about HB 2493:

1. While alternative care practitioners as defined in the HB 2493 have a shared goal of improving the well-being of Oregonians, our disciplines vary greatly in the types of clients we serve, our training, skill set and offerings and yet we are lumped into one, single category. Under Section 9, ORS 676.565 various disciplines are listed separately for an obvious reason as they have their own governing body. A hairstylist is very different than an art therapist, for example. It makes no sense that under HB 2493, potentially hundreds of modalities and alternative care providers would fit under the same ORS.

2. The language of HB 2493 shares similarities to that of a mental health professional. I do not provide counseling services. My clients are not on a mental health treatment plan. I define my practice as a complement, not an alternative or substitute, to any medical or mental health services. In fact, I prefer the word "complement" as opposed to "alternative" and use this language in my disclosures.

3. The HB labels the current situation as an emergency situation and threat to public safety. It is critical that interested parties assemble for the good of Oregonians, and reach common ground. This HB needs changes before it can move forward. It is my understanding that we have a committee of dedicated professionals working on 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 practitioner violates these, then there is legal recourse with laws that are already in place.

4. HB fails to provide an incentive for joining the voluntary registry and fails to understand the culture of the energy healing arts.

a. Many practitioners such as myself make a modest income especially given the Covid restrictions the past 14 months in which my business has decreased dramatically as most of my work was done in-person. The idea of paying fees and fulfilling the additional requirements beyond what I already do to maintain my certifications is not appealing and I see no reason to join as it currently stands.

b. Most of my clients come through referrals of satisfied customers or through a profile page. It is my opinion that most clients who I serve would not be concerned as to whether or not I joined a registry.

5. In Section 2, 1d and 3c: "Meet any other requirements established by the office by rule."

For an alternative practitioner to register or renew the registry, one of the criteria is that they "meet any other requirements established by the office by rule." This statement is vague. Does this mean a practitioner will be required to have a college degree, become a licensed professional in a related discipline, complete 1,000 hours of practice in their area of expertise? Further disclosure is needed.

Thank you for reviewing this testimonial. I appreciate your time and attention.