

To various Oregon legislators, including my own Representative Tina Kotek and Senator Lew Frederick, Representative Andrea Salinas (as sponsor of HB2493), and particularly including the Oregon House Committee on Behavioral Health:

My name is Jim Axling. I was born in Oregon, I live in Oregon, I pay taxes in Oregon on income earned by giving Reiki treatments and teaching taiji. Reiki and taiji are just two of the various practices which would presumably fall into the scope of the proposed legislation. I also myself use Reiki and taiji, as well as other practices which would presumably fall into the scope of the proposed legislation to restore, improve, support, and enhance my own physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being.

I'm testifying today to ask you, for the good of Oregon and for the good of common Oregonians, to please reject HB2493 itself and to also reject the broader legislative strategy toward occupational licensing and registration that is taken in HB2493 – specifically because these embody a **regressive** “solution”. That this “solution” is proposed here in the absence of any truly substantial problem only compounds the difficulties with this proposed legislation.

I refer you to the other testimony given here to describe the myriad ways in which there is not a substantial problem regarding these practices, and therefore no justification to impose the proposed “solution”. That testimony in itself makes a strong case for setting aside HB2493, but it is not the focus of my testimony today.

What I want to speak to you about today is the problem with the “solution” itself – not just for Reiki or any other particular practice that might fall into the scope of this proposed legislation, but for Oregon and Oregonians.

The trend to “professionalize” more and more occupations – in Oregon and elsewhere – has been growing for decades: nearly 20-25% of the workforce today is subject to occupational licensing or registration v only 5% of the workforce in the mid-1900's. Most of that growth is due to requiring licenses or registration for more occupations, usually (as is the case in HB2493) with the stated intent of protecting and benefiting consumers.

Regardless of the stated intent behind it, though, when we look at the actual *impact* of occupational licensing or registration, a more troubling picture appears. Studies and reports about these impacts have been published in the last several years (see links at bottom of my testimony), detailing the social, health, economic, fiscal, and consumer protection consequences of occupational licensing and registration. Sadly, it turns out that the actual consequences largely do **not** benefit the public:

- Consumer costs increase
- Provider costs increase
- Unemployment increases – people who would otherwise be willing and able to do the work are kept from participating
- Revenue available to state budgets decreases – in most states, it was estimated that extra tax revenue from more practitioners engaging in economic activity would more than offset lost licensing/registration fees.
- Public health and consumer protection outcomes are **not improved** – it turns out that occupational licensing/registration is **not effective** in accomplishing its stated goals.

- These consequences of occupational licensing/registration disproportionately impact lower-income and other marginalized people and communities, and disproportionately privileges those people already in the occupation or related occupations with similar protectionist barriers.

I urge the members of this committee and all Oregon legislators to educate yourselves about the real impacts and consequences of occupational licensing and registration, and I urge you to join me and the vast majority of public testifiers here in rejecting this sort of harmful and regressive policy in Oregon.

Thank you for your time and attention this morning.

Sincerely,

Jim Axling

https://goldwaterinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Final_GI_Licensure_PP.pdf

https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/licensing_report_final_nonembargo.pdf

https://pioneerinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/Occupational-Licensing-WP.pdf

<https://ij.org/report/license-work-2/>