

FROM: Donna Roy, LPC, CHT
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TO: House Committee on Behavioral Health

RE: Public Hearing for HB2493

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on House Bill 2493. I am a licensed professional counselor (LPC) and certified Hakomi therapist (CHT) and trainer, with a private counseling and consulting practice. I have co-directed a training organization for 15 years that teaches mindfulness-based therapy to licensed counselors and therapists, graduate counseling students and alternative counseling practitioners. I have been in the counseling field for more than 20 years, with direct involvement in mainstream and non-mainstream clinical worlds.

As an educator, consultant to and colleague of both licensed and unlicensed alternative health care providers, I am an advocate of a practical and ethical model to protect the public and offer professional support for and regulation of alternative practitioners. As such, I am in full support of creating a volunteer alternative practitioner registry in Oregon.

SUMMARY:

I support (1) Oregonians having continued access to alternative therapies and alternative counseling therapists, (2) alternative practitioners in Oregon having increased bona fides as a professional group, (3) the public having appropriate and robust consumer protection, and (4) any registry being voluntary.

Though this is not included in HB2493, I also (5) support offering some sort of professional benefit to those who register--such as state-sponsored ethics and/or self-care courses.

VALUE OF ALTERNATIVE CARE PROVIDER and MODALITIES and a VOLUNTARY STATE REGISTRY:

Excellence in Training

Alternative practitioners generally receive significant training and education in specific modalities and psychological and change theories from respected institutions. These institutes have international reach and long histories in the field of psychotherapy. Some examples in Oregon include the Process Work Institute; the Hakomi Institute and its local affiliate (which I co-direct), Mindful Experiential Therapy Approaches, LLC, (M.E.T.A.); the Gestalt Therapy Training Center; and the Institute of Core Energetics. These professional institutes typically offer credentialing in their specific modality that requires a rigorous multi-

year process. In my case, becoming a Hakomi therapist and eventually trainer was a 10-year process, significantly longer than getting my counseling degree and license.

Diverse Public Choices

My experience has demonstrated to me the value to the public of the contributions of alternative methods and practitioners. I get requests on a regular basis for referrals to certified Hakomi therapists. Some people want this form of mindful counseling and cannot usually access it in traditional mental health service environments. This is also true for other alternative modalities.

Increased Protection of the Public

A statewide registry of alternative practitioners that has specific expectations for its members is needed to foster a supportive environment within which alternative practitioners can safely practice and clients can be assured of appropriate care.

Professional Support

Since providing any sort of professional emotional and wellness support role has both intended and unintended impact, as with licensed counselors, alternative practitioners should receive ongoing professional oversight and support. This contributes to quality of service, protection of vulnerable clients, and career satisfaction and stability. In my role as a private practice clinician and trainer of clinicians, I have seen how critical this is for both licensed and unlicensed practitioners. Though being a therapist is rewarding and socially valued, it is also complex and taxing, requiring knowledge, skills, dedication, and willingness to evolve as a human being in service to our clients.

PROPOSED SYSTEMIC CHANGE:

I support implementing a registry system in Oregon similar to the model successfully employed in the state of Vermont that includes guidelines like the following:

- (1) Distribution of professional training disclosure statements
- (2) Expectation of adherence to explicit standards for ethical and professional conduct
- (3) Accountability of registrants through a complaint and disciplinary process
- (4) Ineligibility for inclusion on the registry for any provider whose credentials have been revoked
- (5) A clear funding mechanism based on provider fees
- (6) Access to state-sponsored ethics and/or self-care courses
- (7) Voluntary inclusion on the registry (so it is recognized as a choice and as a validation of professional intentions)

CLOSING:

Fundamentally, I am suggesting alternative practitioners deserve professional recognition, increased support and basic regulation. It is important for the public and the professionals themselves to have the option of professional registration and accountability. I believe this will enhance alternative practitioner reputations, strengthen public trust and protection, and ensure unethical or harmful behavior can be reported and mitigated.

Thank you for considering these ideas.