

Senate Committee on Mental Health and Recovery
Testimony in Support of HB 4071

February 23, 2022

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, and Senators
Kennemer, Lieber, and Sollman,

My name is Linda Castillo. I serve as a commissioner on the
Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA). I am
submitting testimony in support of HB 4071.

1. OCHA works toward ensuring economic, social,
political, and legal equity for Oregon's Hispanic population.
We do this through advocacy, public policy research,
leadership development, and partnerships.
2. In our statutory role of bringing equity focus and community voice into Oregon policy
making, OCHA strongly supports HB 4071.

Our BIPOC communities have historically been underrepresented in the field of marriage
and family therapists and professional counselors, among other professions. Many who seek
certification have faced barriers entering the profession, getting adequate supervision, and
subsequently receiving licensure and/or certification. There are many barriers in this
process and inadequate resources to support equitable representation of BIPOC
professionals in these much-needed fields. In 2020, OCHA published, *Crisis de Nuestro
Bienestar: A Report on Latino Mental Health*.¹ In the report, we underscored the dearth of

¹ Kim-Gervey, C. et al. (2020). [Crisis de Nuestro Bienestar: A Report on Latino Mental Health in Oregon](#). Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs, Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Department of Human Services.

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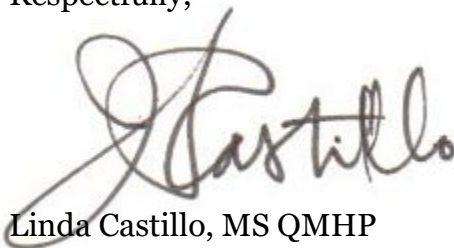
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mental health providers for the Latino/a/x community and the challenging barriers faced to increasing equity in this vital and increasingly needed workforce. Sadly, the statistics for providers in other BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee communities continue to be alarmingly low and inequitable given our community population numbers. This finding was highlighted in the data and from providers in the *Bienestar* report and it was further substantiated in the Farley Report (2019), which assessed the behavioral health workforce in Oregon of both licensed and unlicensed providers. Similarly, it indicated that minority populations are underrepresented in all segments of the behavioral health workforce when compared with the racial and ethnic demographics of Oregon's population. OCHA's report also recommends improvements in the educational pipeline all the way through certification and licensure. While these equitable changes will take time to come to fruition, in the interim our communities are experiencing a devastating time in history with a health pandemic, historic loss of life, depression, suicidal ideation, racism, job loss, and reduced quality of life. Given the OCHA report and my work history as a bilingual, bi-cultural, mental health provider, I believe that advancing HB 4071 will provide an interim pathway to increase equity in the behavioral health profession and offer immediate relief to scores of BIPOC individuals and families who need urgent and critical mental health care, resources, and support.

OCHA supports House Bill 4071 which modifies eligibility criteria for behavioral health workforce incentive programs created in 2021 and creates a new category for licensed marriage and family therapists and professional counselors.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Castillo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Linda Castillo, MS QMHP

