

Submitter: Cody Christopherson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB3274

I have supervised and trained clinicians for ten years and am the current chair of the Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) program at Southern Oregon University. I am writing to you to express my strong support for HB 3274.

The CMHC program at SOU is well-positioned to expand to meet the demands in our area. The program has been CACREP accredited since 2004 and is highly regarded. In general, CACREP accredited programs are held to stringent standards related to the quality of supervision and training. Our recent CACREP re-accreditation process yielded an eight-year re-accreditation, the longest possible. Our graduates are found as clinicians and leaders in every setting in our area.

The program already has a significant impact on our community. Each year, we produce between 18 and 24 new counselors who serve the community for a minimum of 600 hours before graduation. Their service represents over 10,000 annual hours of mental health care to those in need in our area, and many continue to offer services after graduation in clinics, county mental health, and private practice.

HB 3274 represents a next step in addressing the systemic shortage of mental health providers in our area. By increasing the amount of training support, we can establish a sustainable solution that continually trains, supervises, and supports new clinicians. In particular, adding students to the program is a direct function of the number of faculty & staff in the program due to our accreditation. We regularly have more qualified applicants than available slots for new students. By adding a single full-time faculty member and administrative support, we could add 12 new students to our program. These new students would offer over additional 7,000 professional supervised hours, including over 3,000 direct service hours each year before graduation. After graduation, many of them will stay in the area and work in county mental health, local clinics, and in private practice.

The passage of HB 3274 means the chance for us to train more mental health care providers who are well-prepared to enter the workforce and more help to handle the pressing need for treatment in our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Cody Christopherson, PhD

Associate Professor and Chair, Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling