

Testimony in Favor of the -3 Amendments to HB 4071

To: Chair Nosse and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

From: Beth James, LPC, CADCI

Date: February 12, 2024

I represent LifeStance Health as their Regional Clinical Director for Oregon. LifeStance is the Nation's largest mental health provider, and Oregon is one of our largest recipients of care in the Portland Metro, Eugene and Corvallis areas. Personally, I have been providing mental health care in the Portland area since 1996. The following issues we have been experiencing are just a few reasons why we need these compact agreements:

- Both boards are taking upwards of 5-6 months to issue authorization for a CSWA (Certified Social Work Associate) and Professional Counselor Associate.
- Oregon has a high need for mental health services that hasn't been met for years, leading up to our current level of crisis. As a mental health organization, we are attempting to meet this need, but end up hitting roadblocks with the licensing boards due to the time it takes for them to grant licenses to associates to work and granting reciprocity to clinicians moving from out of state.
- We have hired highly competent candidates only to lose them due to the long wait they have, to be able to engage in the professional career they have trained in. We are asking these individuals to wait 3-6 months, sometimes without income to get their licensure plan approved.
- As a business we lose new hires who simply can't wait on the boards because they need an income. In some cases, these applicants are leaving the mental health field, at least temporarily. We have current employees covering open positions, resulting in the burn out of good clinicians because their caseloads are too high.

As a representative of LifeStance Health, I urge you to adopt the -3 amendments to HB4071 to ease the burden on Social Workers and Counselors and support the many clients we serve in Oregon. This would allow us to continue to recruit and employ high quality clinicians to serve Oregon citizens. A compact also greatly benefits our military personnel and families, and facilitates continuity of care for them.

Sincerely,

Beth James, LPC
Regional Clinical Director
LifeStance Health