

February 16, 2024

House Committee on Behavioral Health  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St., NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair's Goodwin and Nelson, and Members of the House Committee:

As a social work student, a proud resident of Oregon for the past 13 years, a mother to a child with behavior challenges, and a Direct Support Professional (DSP) with 12 years of experience working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), many of whom have significant behavioral challenges, **I write to express my support for Oregon HB 4071 and its recent amendments.** These measures hold significant promise for improving and addressing the critical needs of individuals with behavioral and mental health challenges while also removing undue barriers to professional licensure in Oregon.

My experience seeking behavior support for my child has provided me with a first-hand understanding of the difficulty of finding BH providers in our state in a timely manner. I think it is safe to say that Oregon needs more BH professionals, and social workers make up the largest group of these providers in the country. This bill would lower barriers for practitioners who want to practice in Oregon without lowering any qualifications but modernizing and streamlining the process—not just for social workers but healthcare providers as well.

The -1 amendment, establishing the Task Force on Health Professional Licensing Modernization, is particularly significant in this regard. By identifying ways to improve Oregon's health licensure process, this task force will play a crucial role in ensuring that qualified professionals can quickly enter the workforce and address the diverse needs of individuals across the state.

Additionally, the -2 and -3 amendments, which direct Oregon to adopt the Social Work Licensure Compact and the Counseling Compact, respectively, are essential steps towards strengthening our behavioral health workforce and expanding access to vital services. With the recent rise in Telehealth services, social workers and counselors currently have to be separately licensed in every state they practice in. This can become costly and bureaucratic.

In light of my personal and professional experiences, I urge you to support Oregon HB 4071 and its amendments. These measures represent a great opportunity to improve healthcare access, enhance workforce mobility, and ultimately transform the lives of individuals across our state.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and I hope that you will join me in advocating for the passage of HB 4071 for the betterment of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,  
Allison Walbridge  
PSU Social Work Student and Oregon Resident