

My name is Constance, and I am a doctor of nursing practice specializing in psychiatry and mental health. I also serve as a graduate-level nursing professor. I am writing in strong support of SB 1570 with the proposed amendment.

In mental health care, trust is not optional. Patients must feel safe enough to speak honestly about their symptoms, their trauma, and the realities of their lives. When patients fear that seeking care could expose them or their families to immigration enforcement, that trust is fundamentally broken. The presence or even the perceived threat of enforcement activity in clinical spaces creates anxiety, silence, and avoidance, all of which directly interfere with accurate diagnosis, effective treatment, and continuity of care. In my clinical work, I have seen patients delay treatment, withhold critical information, or disengage entirely because they are afraid of being questioned or identified while seeking help.

This bill is helpful because it provides clear, consistent guidance for health care facilities and staff across the state. By establishing firm boundaries around access to non-public patient care areas and the handling of sensitive personal information, it removes ambiguity during high-stress situations. Clinicians and support staff should not be forced to make legal judgments in the moment while also caring for patients in crisis. Clear policies protect patients while also protecting staff from confusion, liability, and moral distress.

The bill also strengthens patient confidentiality in a way that aligns with both ethical standards and trauma-informed care. Treating immigration status and place of birth as protected information acknowledges the real harm that disclosure can cause and reinforces the principle that health care data exists solely to support treatment, not surveillance. When patients trust that their information will be safeguarded, they are more likely to seek care early, remain engaged in treatment, and experience better health outcomes.

As an educator, I am deeply aware of the lessons our policies teach future clinicians. This legislation affirms that health care settings are spaces for healing, safety, and dignity, not fear. It supports a culture in which patient well-being includes psychological safety and where clinicians are empowered to practice ethically and compassionately. For these reasons, I urge you to support SB 1570 as amended.

Thank you for your time and consideration.