

Submitter: Arien Muzacz  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1547

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding SB 1547. I appreciate the Legislature's commitment to addressing Oregon's behavioral health workforce shortage, particularly in K–12 settings where student mental health needs continue to rise. However, I respectfully oppose SB 1547 in its current form due to serious concerns about unintended consequences for student care and workforce standards.

Creating a bachelor's-level behavioral health license risks establishing a lower-cost alternative to hiring master's-level school counselors and licensed professional counselors in K–12 schools. Given existing budget constraints, districts may feel financial pressure to hire less expensive, bachelor's-prepared providers rather than fully licensed, master's-level clinicians who have completed rigorous graduate training, supervised clinical hours, and national competency standards.

Master's-level school counselors and mental health counselors are trained in child and adolescent development, risk assessment, suicide prevention, trauma-informed care, special education law, systems-level consultation, and culturally responsive practice. Their preparation includes extensive supervised clinical experience and ethical training designed to protect vulnerable youth. Diluting licensure standards in school-based settings could result in students—particularly those with complex mental health needs—receiving services from providers without sufficient training to identify and respond to high-risk situations.

While expanding the behavioral health workforce is essential, Oregon should prioritize pathways that strengthen and diversify the master's-level pipeline rather than create a parallel, lower-credentialed track that may inadvertently widen inequities in care. Students in under-resourced districts are especially likely to be served by the least trained providers, exacerbating existing disparities.

As a licensed professional counselor, State Board approved supervisor and nationally board certified counselor and supervisor, counselor educator, and concerned parent, I urge the Legislature to consider workforce development solutions that expand access without lowering professional standards for those serving Oregon's children.

Thank you for your consideration,

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