

**TO: House Committee on Behavioral Health**  
**FR: Gianna Russo-Mitma MS, LMFT, COPACT Board Member**  
**DA: February 22, 2021**  
**RE: HB 2585**

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Chair Sanchez and members of the committee,

The Coalition of Professional Associations of Counselors and Therapists (COPACT) advocates for the 6000 Licensed Professional Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists and Registered Interns who provide mental health care to over 100,000 Oregonians each week through their work in agencies, universities, corrections, health clinics, rehabilitation, and private practice.

**On behalf of LPCs and LMFTs of COPACT, I write in support of HB 2585 and urge that you move it with a DO PASS recommendation.**

As mental health professionals, we see firsthand the negative impact of how lack of mental health access affects our clients and our communities, especially those with disabilities or those in marginalized communities. Folks experiencing deafness, blindness, or are hard of hearing have been experiencing barriers to mental health treatment due to lack of qualified interpreters in a treatment setting. We need to make sure that structural and institutional ableism is not an unnecessary obstacle to healthcare services for clients, and HB 2585 takes a thoughtful approach to beginning to address this urgent problem.

COPACT supports that, according to this bill, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) should make programs available that can help with access to mental healthcare for marginalized individuals with hearing and seeing disabilities, while also maintaining a cultural competency lens. In order to support this idea, clinicians in the field need resources for qualified, competent, and confidential interpreters. We cannot allow denial of mental health treatment due to a disability, as this further inflicts ableism and oppression on our clients and communities.

COPACT specifically supports HB 2585, which promotes and encourages access to mental healthcare for folks with vision and hearing disabilities, furthering to address health inequities in our community and state. Addressing this mental health disparity in Oregon cannot wait—we know firsthand that it is a legitimate emergency.

**Thank you for tackling this urgent and important matter. On behalf of the thousands of counselors and therapists across Oregon, COPACT strongly supports HB 2585 and urges Committee members to move it to the floor with a DO PASS recommendation.**