

TO: Chair Nosse and Members of the House Health Care Committee and The Behavioral Health Subcommittee

FR: Jessica Broderick & Elisabeth Herrera, COPACT Leadership

DA: 2/12/2024

RE: HB 4071, Amendment -3 and HB 4071 Amendment -1

In Support of -3 Amendment to HB 4071 and a request to change -1 Amendments:

1. On behalf of COPACT, I am writing in support of adding the -3 Amendment to HB 4071:

The Coalition of Professional Associations of Counselors and Therapists (COPACT) advocates for the 6000 Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) and Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs) whose professions are regulated by the Oregon Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists (OBLPCT), which is a joint board with the Oregon Board of Psychology (OBP).

The Counseling Compact is an interstate licensure compact designed to foster interstate licensure portability, increase access to mental health services, and enhance public protection for the counseling profession and its clients. The Counseling Compact is built on the uniform standards that currently exist among states and the trust that individual state licensing regulation provides for competent and ethical care.

The Compact will allow qualified professional counselors to practice in all states that join the compact. Currently, 28 states have passed the compact legislation, including Washington state, and 11 states have pending legislation. This will remove the need for counselors to obtain separate licenses in different states effectively opening up greater access to mental health services. The Compact is the same form and function as other occupational licensure compacts such for nurses, physical therapists, physicians, psychologists and EMS personnel. Existing interstate occupational licensure compacts have been successful in reducing barriers for practitioners who wish to provide services in other states. The Counseling Compact authorizes interstate practice both in-person and through telehealth by professional counselors who hold valid, unrestricted home state licenses.

The Counseling Compact will benefit consumers—and the counseling profession—by:

- Increasing access to quality care for all Oregonians;
- Ensuring continuity of care when clients or counselors relocate or travel to other states;
- Requiring consistently high standards of public health safety in the participating states;
- Enhancing mobility for counselors who meet uniform licensure requirements;
- Supporting Military personnel and spouses to maintain their licenses to practice when relocating and allowing access to care for relocating military families;
- Preserving and strengthening the current system of state licensure, and;

- Ensuring the cooperation among compact member states in regulating the practice of professional counseling.

COPACT strongly supports enacting the Counseling Compact.

2. In addition to supporting the -3 Amendment, COPACT wishes to express concern that neither Licensed Professional Counselor nor Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, is represented in the -1 Amendments to HB 4071.

We are concerned in the -1 Amendments to HB 4071, establishing The Task Force on Professional Licensing Modernization, as it is currently written Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists are not included. LPCs and LMFTs are central to providing services in Oregon's behavioral health care system, and represent a fast-growing sector of mental health professionals in Oregon.

As an organization representing thousands of Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists in Oregon, we respectfully ask that a representative of licensed professional counselors licensed under ORS 675.715 be added to the -1 Amendments.

Thank you very much for your time and for all you do to support behavioral health access in Oregon.