

Submitter: Raymond Miller

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB4071

February 12, 2024

The Honorable Rob Nosse,  
House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care Members  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem Oregon 97301

Testimony on behalf of the Board of Licensed Social Workers regarding HB 4071 - 2

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you all for the opportunity to discuss House Bill 4071 and the -2 amendment.

For the record, my name is Ray Miller, and I am the executive director of the Oregon Board of Licensed Social Workers. The Board of Licensed Social Workers is statutorily responsible to protect the citizens of Oregon through the regulation of social workers. This is accomplished by setting policy, establishing standards of practice and ethical conduct, establishing standards for certification and licensure, including renewals, and monitoring continuing education requirements.

Since taking this position in November 2023, I have heard the message loud and clear – we must immediately improve customer service and responsiveness to address the challenges facing our practice and the state of Behavioral Health Care in Oregon. My team and our board share these goals, and we are excited by the Committee's attention and focus on identifying strategies to further this work.

Our board is prioritizing (1) decreasing licensing times, (2) improving customer service, and (3) expanding the number of folks participating in this profession. I want to give you an example of how seriously we take this work:

? Since November, total licensing processing times have decreased 23%.

? We have also specifically focused on CSWA applications as they are a workforce entry point for lower barrier behavioral health services. Since August, licensing times for CSWA applications decreased 54.9%.

We are committed to continuing this trajectory and sustaining these changes in the long-term through appropriate staffing and resources.

The Board of Licensed Social Workers are invested in collaboratively working with our partners and request time in the interim to work with organizations such as the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and other stakeholders to fully understand the various concerns and barriers and propose solutions in partnership with our stakeholders. The Board, the Department of Justice, and other interested parties have yet to be able to fully evaluate the implications of entering the compact, including potential conflicts with the Oregon Constitution.

A careful review of the compact prior to adoption is essential to allow the board to decipher the compact laws, align rules, and educate licensees about the forthcoming changes the compact would bring. Smooth compact operations depend on trust among the compact partners, but that trust is undermined when the process to establish the compact is not collaborative.

The board requests the opportunity to engage with our partners to identify the long-term solutions that will work for Oregon social workers. I thank the Committee in advance for putting your trust in us to take a serious look at these issues and make real improvements for the betterment of our state.

Sincerely,

Raymond Miller