

Submitter: Dena Wilder  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB729

Senate Committe members:

Thank you for considering this very important bill. I have worked as a Direct Support Professional and have experienced discrimination trying to access counseling services for the clients I support with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I have had clinics tell me that their staff members are not trained to counsel people on the autism spectrum. When I tell them that the client I support is simply wanting to discuss relationships, just as any other human that walks through their doors, they just repeat that they are not trained to work with people on the spectrum. It has been shocking to me that a counselor, of all people, feels that they cannot work with someone who is neurodivergent. When we finally are able to find a counselor who is willing to give it a go, we often attend with our client for the first 2-10 sessions as our client builds rapport with the counselor. Maybe that part is a little different, but we are there to help with communication and be the emotional anchor they need as they develop a new relationship. It is hard enough to find counseling, to have the barrier of discrimination, makes it even more difficult. Please, pass this bill to keep discrimination out of mental health care!

Dena Wilder, Portland resident