

## Written Testimony in Support of HB 3351: Enacting the Interstate Counseling Compact in Oregon

Dear Chair Nosse and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

My name is **Judith Spencer**, and I am an **LPC** practicing in **Portland, Oregon**. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 3351, which would allow Oregon to join the Interstate Counseling Compact. I want to be able to better serve my clients, who in a very mobile world sometimes need to travel out of state, or move and cannot quickly gain access to services in a new location.

### How the Counseling Compact Would Benefit My Practice

- We have clients who participate in DBT skills groups, that typically meet twice a week for six months. We have had clients begin the program and then have to leave before program is complete because their family moves out of state, or their job takes them to another location.
- We had one client who moved to Alaska for a teaching job, living in a remote village where there was no DBT program. She wanted to finish the skills training that she had started but was unable to under current rules.

By joining the Counseling Compact, Oregon can:

- **Expand Access to Care:** Allowing licensed counselors from other member states to practice in Oregon will increase the availability of mental health professionals, particularly in underserved and rural areas.
- **Support Military Families and Relocated Clients:** Military families and individuals who move frequently would benefit from continued access to their counselors without interruption.
- **Reduce Administrative Burdens:** The Compact will streamline the licensing process, saving time and financial resources for both practitioners and regulatory agencies.
- **Maintain High Professional Standards:** Participating states share disciplinary information to ensure the quality and safety of care provided across state lines.

### Why This Matters for My Clients

#### Some examples from my practice where clients could benefit:

- A client recently spent a month trying to set up care for her aging and disabled mother in another state. It was a distressing time for her and yet I was not allowed under Oregon rules to provide counseling to her while she was out of state. She could not easily get services for herself as a visitor.
- Likewise, another client had a sister who was on hospice for six months before she died. This client was often gone to support sister for two months at a time and could only be seen at our clinic on brief visits home, before returning to be with sister. She was deprived of having counseling services regularly during a highly stressful period of her life.

As a provider, I see HB 3351 as a crucial step toward expanding access to quality care while ensuring efficiency in serving more clients. I encourage you to support this bill to enhance Oregon's mental health system and make essential services more accessible.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Judith Spencer, LPC*

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Resident of Vancouver, WA