



To: [SENATOR or REPRESENTATIVE] [LEGISLATOR'S NAME]

From Occupational Therapy Doctorate Program, Western Oregon University

Date Feb 18, 2025

Subject: Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact/ HB 2357

Dear members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Healthcare, we hope this letter finds you well. We are members of the Occupational Therapy community and your constituents. Our program is located at 525 Trade St SE, Salem, OR 97301.

We are a newly instituted Occupational Therapy Doctorate Program and the first public program in the state of Oregon. Our faculty currently consists of 8 Occupational Therapists who have worked across settings in mental health, physical health, pediatrics, geriatrics, hand therapy, and academia. Collectively we have over 115 years (ranging from 4-30 years per therapist) serving as occupational therapists since 1994, and specifically serving communities in Oregon since 1998. Once fully staffed, we anticipate graduating 40 students per year from our program.

The Occupational Therapy Association of Oregon (OTAO) has been busy working to prepare for the 2025 Legislative session and has advocated for HB 2357 to be considered. As a member of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care, we expect this bill to be one that you consider this session, so we are writing to express our thoughts on it.

The OT Licensure Compact is a pivotal initiative that enhances licensure portability and empowers member state regulatory boards to better protect consumers through effective sharing of licensure information. Previous interstate compacts have successfully lowered barriers and administrative duties for practitioners seeking to provide services in multiple states.

Oregon has a projected occupational therapist industry growth of 15.3%, as the Oregon Employment Department reported. According to the Oregon Health Authority, counties statewide show a significant need for OTs. For example, Polk County has only one OT



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per 29,305 people and six practicing OTs. We believe the OT Compact will bring key benefits to consumers, members, and the profession by increasing mobility for occupational therapists and assistants, expanding access to care, and ensuring continuity of care for clients.

Our graduates, who are future practitioners, will most likely remain in Oregon, and having a licensure compact enables them to meet the occupational needs of Oregonians in rural counties. This was the primary reason for establishing the OT program at WOU.

Importantly, the OT Compact upholds the authority of each member state to regulate the profession, requiring all practitioners to comply with the laws and scope of practice of the state where they work, thus resulting in strengthening the existing state licensure system.

We strongly urge you to support the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact/HB 2357. Our lawmakers must prioritize the health and well-being of all Oregonians, which includes access to occupational therapy services. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We appreciate your service and dedication to our community. We hope to see you continue to support positive changes that reflect the needs and concerns of your constituents.

Sincerely,

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