

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 Michelle Vosika-Cooper, and I am a Licensed Professional Counselor practicing in Portland. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 3351, which would allow Oregon to join the Interstate Counseling Compact. Our ability to support many clients remotely is now a field-tested fact thanks to our collective experience during lockdown. The prohibition of working with clients remotely while in another state is now, thanks to technology and lived-experience, so absurd an experience to clients that it borders on cruel, unethical, and re-traumatizing for those who historically have had care and support withheld. Joining the ICC will vastly increase the capacity of Oregon therapists to maintain contemporary standards of continuity of care reflective of, and responsive to, real-world needs.

How the Counseling Compact Would Benefit My Practice

My practice is focused on the early attachment traumas that continue to impair adult clients, particularly adult clients of color, who have lacked lived experience of a consistent, dependable, and caring other. Joining the ICC would benefit my practice by making it legal to support clients when they travel or relocate to participating states without having to recreate the circumstances of their wounding.

Why This Matters for My Clients

An Example: A client had to travel out of state to be with family during the cancer treatment and eventual death of their father. This client had to go months without the support of therapy. When the client returned to Oregon and to therapy, we spent many weeks getting through the rupture caused from the client feeling abandoned when they needed support the most. Much of the client's progress had been lost and the damage done to the therapeutic alliance is still being healed 4 years later.

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.

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,

Michelle Vosika-Cooper

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