

Submitter: Kat Wood
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3351

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

My name is Kat Wood, and I am a Professional Counselor Associate practicing in Oregon. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 3351, which would allow Oregon to join the Interstate Counseling Compact.

As a pre-licensed associate providing telehealth services, I have seen firsthand how barriers to interstate practice negatively impact both clients and clinicians. Many of my clients face significant disruptions in care when they move across state lines for work, family obligations, or educational opportunities. This is particularly concerning for populations who already experience systemic barriers to mental health support, such as LGBTQ+ and BIPOC individuals, trauma survivors, and those navigating financial instability.

How the Counseling Compact Would Benefit My Practice

One of the biggest challenges I encounter is ensuring continuity of care for clients who relocate, especially in times of crisis. Currently, when a client moves out of state, I am unable to continue working with them, forcing them to either find a new provider—often with long waitlists—or forgo support altogether. For individuals with complex trauma or marginalized identities, starting over with a new clinician can be retraumatizing and deter them from seeking further care. While I understand that this bill would not allow me to practice across state lines as a pre-licensed associate, I fully support it because of the benefits it will provide to my clients once I obtain full licensure.

By joining the Counseling Compact, Oregon can:

-Expand Access to Care: Enabling licensed counselors from other member states to practice in Oregon will increase the availability of mental health professionals, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

-Support Military Families and Relocated Clients: Clients who move frequently, including military families and remote workers, will be able to maintain therapeutic relationships without interruption.

-Reduce Administrative Burdens: The Compact will streamline the licensure process, reducing wait times and financial barriers for providers while allowing the Oregon Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists to allocate resources more efficiently.

-Maintain High Professional Standards: Participating states will share disciplinary information, ensuring that ethical and competent care remains a priority.

I have had multiple clients leave the state to visit their families, sometimes for extended periods, and during that time, they lost access to their clinician due to restrictions on interstate telehealth. For some, such as those attending family funerals, visiting family with whom they have conflicts, or temporarily relocating for work while still needing mental health support, losing access to their provider has been a great hardship. While some clients are able to engage temporarily with other clinicians while they are away, others struggle to do so due to difficulty in establishing trust. In these cases, I have witnessed declines in their mental health. For clients who relocate permanently, I have seen cases where it takes them months to establish new care, leaving them without critical support. If Oregon joins the Counseling Compact, I will be able to continue supporting them through these transitions once I am fully licensed, helping mitigate the risk of regression and ensuring uninterrupted care.

As a provider committed to increasing accessibility and continuity of care, I see HB 3351 as a vital step toward modernizing Oregon's mental health system. By reducing unnecessary barriers for both clients and clinicians, we can create a more responsive and effective mental health infrastructure. I strongly urge you to support this bill to enhance access to care for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kat Wood, MAAT, Professional Counselor Associate, ATR-P, RYT