

Chair Nosse,  
Vice Chair Javadi,  
Vice Chair Nelson,  
And Members of the House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee:

I am here today seeking the support of this Committee in creating legislation defining the time period that the Oregon Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists lists disciplinary actions publicly. Currently, the term is indefinite.

I was disciplined for an incident in 2018 involving a custody dispute and loyalty pull of a child. Comments I made in a session with the adolescent were found to be inappropriate. My comment involved poor timing in that the comments were made prior to my having gathered all the information about the client's background. When examined by the Board investigator, I was asked three yes/no questions to which I responded with honesty and transparency. I did not have an opportunity to discuss my perspective or even know what it was I was being accused of. Next, I was formally disciplined. I accepted the required discipline with humility and did all that was required to satisfy the court order and to grow as a therapist. I was required to complete six months of supervision and six continuing education units, as well as pay for administrative costs to the State for my discipline.

Since that time, I have been listed on the Board's website as disciplined with some details noted. However, if you google me, following my name it says that my license was revoked. This hurtful inaccuracy is the result of the way Google interacts with websites. Another person on the same page as mine had her license revoked, but her information showed up beneath my name. I requested that the Board correct this misrepresentation and they have refused. As a result, my professional reputation has been greatly harmed. This misrepresentation continues online to this day. Please see the attached screenshot. Google states that it is only the content creator that can change how the feed reads and the Board has refused to change it.

I have felt destroyed in my career and marked as "a bad player". I have spent my life focusing on what I could do to make the planet a better feeling place for people and have tried to do that through my work in many social service settings.

Therapists disciplined by our licensure board for simple errors are treated like criminals, suffering public humiliation indefinitely. I am requesting that our therapist community be treated with a more compassionate approach as we have dedicated our lives to helping others who suffer mental illness. Counselors need support in supporting this community. We are few and far between. We are human. We make mistakes. We grow from those mistakes. The Board should take into account the larger body of work a counselor has contributed and will continue to contribute.

I have dedicated my entire career to being a "helper", and I feel devastated that I am to be forever "shamed" for a mistake I have addressed with the utmost seriousness and sincerity. I almost gave up my work as a counselor as a result of how discipline is handled by our Board. I have significantly lowered my case load and carefully assess risk management to me when working with teens.

I agree that it is important to protect the public - but not all "cases" of discipline are equal. For completed disciplinary orders, resulting from less serious offences, please consider a time limit of 3-5 years for publicly listing someone on the online Disciplinary Report. This applies only to those of us who did not have our licenses revoked and who are not barred from licensure. Those who have had their licenses revoked will continue to have that revocation listed indefinitely.

Thank you so much for your consideration; you are appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Linda K Berlingen, LPC C2120