



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

(Written Testimony Only)

S.B. 695, SD2, HD1: Relating to Professional Counselors

Testimony Presented Before the House
Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce

January 28, 2004

by

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Dean, College of Education

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Chairman Hiraki, Vice Chair Herkes, and Members of the
Committee:

We are in support of the intent of S.B. 695, SD2, HD1, and offer
the following comments:

- The course work and requirements for licensure for Professional Counselors is at least equal to that of other master level mental health professionals already licensed in the State of Hawai'i.
- Thirty-seven (37) of the states that license mental health counselors use the National Certification Exam or the Certified Rehabilitation Counselors Exam (as required in this bill) for testing purposes. The other states use a variety of examinations including some developed by that state.
- S.B. 695, SD2, HD1 requires that those who would be eligible for licensure in the first year have passed the required exam and have met the standards required when they entered practice. Those nationally certified must also submit 100 continuing education hours every five years in order to maintain their certification.
- From talking to counselor educators and counselors, we believe most are in agreement with the intent of this bill.
- It appears Hawai'i has always opposed licensure for all mental health professionals; however, all core mental

health professionals are licensed except professional counselors.

- Sunrise reports have stated there is little evidence of consumer harm. It would appear that the reason for that is that without licensure there is no one the public can report to regarding the accountability of the profession. Some mental health professionals have seen the complaints rise after licensure.
- The State of Hawai'i is not maximizing Federal funding, as without regulation they are unable to take full advantage of Federal Medicaid dollars.
- Medicare reimbursement is not available to Professional Counselors or Marriage and Family Therapists (who are already licensed in Hawai'i), however, there are bills introduced in Congress that are addressing that issue. It is expected that within the next few years Professional Counselors will be eligible for that reimbursement.
- The State Departments of Education and Health (CAMHD) have the following requirements for mental health professionals:

For the Department of Education (DOE)

- Ten of their positions require master level mental health professionals.
- Of these ten, seven are required to be licensed and one position states QMPH (which has been defined as licensed), however, the qualifications do not state licensure.
- Two of the positions requiring licensure have the exact same responsibilities as one of the positions that do not require licensure.
- Three of these positions are supervisory and the others are not.
- One position's responsibility requires the MPH to provide assessments.

For the Department of Health, Child and Adolescent
Mental Health
Division (CAMHD)

- Six positions require master mental health professionals.

- Of these six, five positions require licensure.

- One position that is licensed is supervisory.

- No position requires the person to provide individual assessments.

We strongly urge you to pass S.B. 695, SD 2, HD1, with amendments.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

c: SB695, SD2, HD1_UOH_01-28-04_HLT, CPC, FIN