

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR
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DEPT. COMM. NO. 37

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State Auditor

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March 13, 2008

The Honorable Colleen Hanabusa
President of the Senate
State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Madam President:

I transmit to you a copy of our report, *Sunset Evaluation: Mental Health Counselors*.

We evaluated the regulation of mental health counselors under Chapter 453D, HRS, which is scheduled for repeal on December 31, 2008. Similar to findings in prior sunrise reports, we found little evidence of abuse by mental health counselors sufficient to warrant licensing based on criteria in Section 26H-2, HRS. However, from a broader perspective, there is evidence that licensure appears to be achieving several objectives sought by the Legislature when it established the licensing program in 2004, which benefits the consumer overall. In accordance with the evaluation criteria set forth in Section 26H-5, HRS, we found that the continued licensing of mental health counselors is in the public interest. The repeal date should be removed and the Legislature should consider adding mental health counselors to the list of authorized practitioners in Chapter 431M, HRS.

We hope that the report will assist you in reviewing the issues examined. We will place the report on our website, www.state.hi.us/auditor, and release it to the public and press, on Friday, March 14, 2008.

Sincerely,

Marion M. Higa
State Auditor

Enclosure

✓c: Carol Taniguchi, Senate Clerk