

**LINDA LINGLE**  
GOVERNOR  
**JAMES R. AIONA, JR.**  
LT. GOVERNOR

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR**  
**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS**  
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**LAWRENCE M. REIFURTH**  
DIRECTOR  
**RONALD BOYER**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**PRESENTATION OF THE  
PROFESSIONAL AND VOCATIONAL LICENSING DIVISION**

TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE  
Regular Session of 2008

Friday, February 8, 2008  
8:00 a.m.

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2566, RELATING TO PROFESSIONS.**

TO THE HONORABLE JOSH GREEN, M.D., CHAIR,  
AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

My name is Celia Suzuki, testifying on behalf of the Professional and Vocational Licensing Division of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs ("Department"). The Department appreciates the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 2566, Relating to Professions. The Department believes that the action proposed in this bill may be premature and therefore recommends an amendment to keep the bill moving for further discussion.

House Bill No. 2566 proposes to repeal the sunset date of December 31, 2008 for Chapter 453D, Hawaii Revised Statutes ("HRS"), relating to mental health counselors.

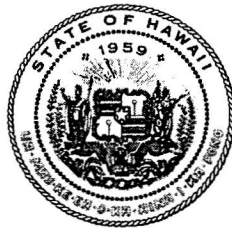
000171

Testimony on House Bill No. 2566  
Friday, February 8, 2008  
Page 2

The Department is aware that the Office of the Auditor is currently conducting the sunset review of Chapter 453D, HRS, and intends to furnish the report to the Legislature this legislative session. Any definitive position on retaining or repealing Chapter 453D should be made **after** the sunset report and the Auditor's recommendations are presented. Thus, the Committee may wish to amend the bill to insert a defective date, allowing it to move forward while awaiting the Auditor's report.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill No. 2566.

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**TESTIMONY OF MARION M. HIGA, STATE AUDITOR,  
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2566, RELATING TO PROFESSIONS.**

**House Committee on Health**

**February 8, 2008**

Chair Green and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 2566. This bill repeals the sunset provision for the licensing program for mental health counselors created in 2004 by the Legislature under Act 209.

Currently, the office has engaged a consultant to conduct a sunset analysis of the mental health counselors licensing program as required under Section 26H-4(b), Hawai'i Revised Statutes. One of the criteria for our sunset analysis is whether the licensing program provides a benefit to consumers. Until the sunset report is submitted to the Legislature this session, the proposal may be premature. However, if we conclude that licensing mental health counselors has its benefits in protecting consumers, then the proposal will be needed.

This bill ought to be considered further by the Legislature, but we ask that a defective date be put into section 3, before allowing it to move forward. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

000173

Testimony of  
Phyllis Dendle  
Director of Government Affairs

Before:  
House Committee on Health  
The Honorable Josh Green M.D., Chair  
The Honorable John Mizuno, Vice Chair

February 8, 2008  
8:00 am  
Conference Room 329

#### **HB 2566 RELATING TO PROFESSIONS**

Chair Green and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB2224 which makes permanent the protection of the title and practice of professional mental health counselors.

#### **Kaiser Permanente supports this bill.**

Hawaii was one of only three states that did not license professional counselors. While national certification has been available, it did not provide the same benefits or protections to the public as state licensure. These masters level mental health clinicians bring valuable skills to the community. Licensing them assures professionalism and the protection of consumers.

We urge you to make permanent this protection. Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

711 Kapiolani Blvd  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Telephone: 808-432-5210  
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Mobile: 808-754-7007  
E-mail: [phyllis.dendle@kp.org](mailto:phyllis.dendle@kp.org)

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**Ka Mauli Ola – The Power Of Healing Therapeutic Svcs.  
A Culturally Based Practice Specializing In Women’s Issues, Family  
Systems, Adolescent Concerns & Substance/Alcohol Abuse**

DATE: **INSERT DATE OF HEARING**

TO: The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair, The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Health

FROM: **Joddy Manuwai, LMHC, NCC**  
(808) 222 – 0093  
*KaMauliOla@gmail.com*

RE: HB 2566, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**I am testifying in strong support of HB 2566.**

Aloha `Oukou

The recent events our island has witnessed – the beating death of the woman in Kailua, a mother of five, coupled with the senseless death of baby Cyrus – has given awareness to the people of this state that strengthening the quality of care providers by the mental health care system is a given and an issue that must be addressed. Recent court actions targeting the Hawaii State Department of Mental Health bring an awareness of the need for additional qualified providers to join in effectively meeting the mental health needs in our beautiful state.

The ongoing need for additional mental health providers to address the needs of children and adolescents have been acknowledged by the Department of Health. Currently, the DOH provides intensive in – home services for youth who meet a specific level of criteria. The suggested time period of this path is usually six months and upon discharge, its up to the parent or guardian to continue services through the youth’s private insurance. At times this may be difficult; many behavioral health specialists are either over – booked or not accepting new patients. In many cases, the type of private insurance they have makes a difference; many of these youth are Quest plan clients.

In June of 2007, after meeting the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs mandates, I was licensed as a Mental Health Counselor. The following month, when Lingle failed to veto our licensure bill, the door remained open. Although this move by Lingle didn’t ensure vendorship, many insurance companies – Aloha Care, TriCare, HMAA, UHA/Summerlin – accepted us as

providers. What this did for me personally was open the door to work with the population I am so invested in – my people, the Hawaiian people.

Knowing the importance of supporting the mental health of persons in rural areas, my work began and has continued to revolve around the Leeward Coast. The ongoing goal continues to be providing high quality mental health services that are affordable and easily accessible. Although the lack of resources in the Mental Health Care system [in Hawai`i] continues to make meeting this goal difficult, supporting the continuation of the *Hawai`i Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law* would at minimum enable a qualified resource pool of mental health providers to continue assisting this population that is plagued with homelessness, domestic violence and most prevalent, the alcohol and substance use/abuse. It goes without saying that the ice epidemic here is rampant!

Continuing the *Hawai`i Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law* by having the existing “sunset provision” deleted will be your way of helping to ensure that additional providers who are as qualified as the licensures the Department of Health currently recognizes – Ph.D., Psy.D. LCSW, and most recently, LMFT – are available to continue supporting the mission of the Hawaii Department of Mental Health.

This being said, I thank you for your time and encourage you, the individuals who have the authority and the ability, to pass HB 2566 out of the Committee on Health.

Malama pono,

Joddy Manuwai, LMHC, NCC\*

\*National Board of Certified Counselors

000176

**Selina K. Higa, M Ed, CRC, LMHC**  
**94-1156 Awaiki Pl.**  
**Waipahu, HI 96797**

DATE: February 8, 2008

TO: The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair, The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Health

FROM: Selina K. Higa, M Ed, CRC, LMHC  
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor  
VA-Honolulu Regional Office

RE: HB 2566, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**I am testifying in strong support of HB 2566.**

I am currently employed full time with the Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Division as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. We are required to have our Masters degree in Counseling Education with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Major and to be current as a National Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC). However, we are not currently required to have an LMHC at this time. I work with service connected disabled veterans with varying disabilities and some who have severe multiple disabilities that include physical, mental, and emotional disabilities.

We are seeing greater numbers of service connected disabled veterans with multiple injuries due to the Iraq and Afganistan Conflicts and we will continue to see more. We have seen an increase of as many as 100 new applicants a month to our division alone. Many suffer from TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury) and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) disabilities on top of other physical disabilities and depression due to their multiple injuries. It is definitely helpful and important that I be as qualified as possible to deal with these severely disabled veterans in assisting them with their educational needs and employment needs as a counselor. Having my License as a Mental Health Counselor also assures my supervisor and the Dept. of Veterans Affairs that I am best qualified to meet my veteran's multiple needs. Having that license also helps me to be certain that I am able to address their counseling needs especially when our medical staff is also overwhelmed with the number of new veterans knocking at our doors and the outreach we are doing to service them.

In a few months, approximately 3000 Army soldiers will return to Hawaii. It is expected that at least 10% of them will suffer from Mental Health issues such as PTSD and/or Depression and will require Mental Health Counseling from Licensed individuals. Therefore, even more Licensed individuals who are qualified to address their mental health needs will be essential to properly service those protecting our freedom.

I encourage you to pass HB 2566 out of the Committee on Health.

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**Kenneth Fields, MA, NCC, LMHC**

**DATE: Friday, February 7, 2008**

**TO:** The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair, The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Health

**FROM: Kenneth Fields**  
(808) 250-9925

**RE:** HB 2566, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of HB 2566.

There is little question that mental health is important to the well being of our community. It is equally important that the public have access to qualified mental health professionals who are required to meet established standards of performance. By providing state licensure to professional mental health counselors, the state ensures that the public has available such qualified individuals from whom they can seek assistance.

I strongly encourage the repeal of the sunset clause regarding mental health counselor licensure and encourage the state of Hawaii to support mental health through establishing a permanent law which allows for licensure of mental health counselors.

I encourage you to pass HB 2566 out of the Committee on Health



**HAWAII REHABILITATION COUNSELING ASSOCIATION**  
P O BOX 4385  
HONOLULU, HI 96812



DATE: February 8, 2008

TO: The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair,  
The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Vice – Chair and Members of the  
Committee on Health

FROM: Betty Sestak, MS, LMHC, CRC, NCC  
Legislative Chair, Hawaii Rehabilitation Counseling Assoc.

RE: **HB 2566, Relating to Professions**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

I am testifying in strong support of HB 2566.

The Hawaii Rehabilitation counseling Association represents 50 practicing vocational rehabilitation counselors in the state of Hawaii. Hawaii Rehabilitation Counseling Association has been an active professional association representing the professional needs of Hawaii rehabilitation counselors for more than 30 years.

Licensure is important to assure the public that mental health providers in Hawaii are competent to provide qualified and ethical services. Licensure provides consistent and accountable standards of practice. It further provides for recourse of the client when they are harmed in some way by a provider who is unethical or incompetent.

Hawaii Rehabilitation Counseling Association is in favor of HB2566 and strongly supports its passage. I encourage you to pass HB 2566 out of the Committee on Health

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and to support this bill.

ED 00 00 12:30P      SESTAK      000-202-0330      P. 2

**S**  
**S R S SESTAK REHABILITATION SERVICES**  
**S**

1181 Mapuana St.  
Kailua, HI 96734  
(808) 391-9390

DATE: February 8, 2008

TO: Representative Josh Green, Chair,  
Representative John Mizuno, Vice- Chair;  
Members of the Committee on Health

FROM: Betty Sestak, MS, LMHC, CRC, NCC

RE: **HB2566: RELATING TO PROFESSIONS**

**I am testifying in strong support of HB2566 Relating to Professions.**

I am a rehabilitation counselor who has been in practice in Hawaii since 1976 and am in strong support of licensure for all master and doctoral level counselors in the mental health field. I am gratified that Hawaii State has recognized this and passed the mental health counselor licensure law. Licensure is important to assure the public that mental health providers in Hawaii are competent to provide qualified and ethical services. Licensure provides consistent and accountable standards of practice. It further provides for recourse of the client when they are harmed in some way by a provider who is unethical or incompetent.

I am in favor of HB2566 and strongly support its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and to support this bill.

Betty Sestak, MS, LMHC, CRC, NCC, CCM  
Rehabilitation Counselor

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DATE: February 8, 2008

TO: The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair, The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Health

FROM: Valerie T. Poindexter, O’okala, Hawaii

RE: HB 2566, Relating to Professions

Aloha Honorable Representative Josh Green, Honorable Representative John Mizuno and Members of the Committee on Health,

My name is Valerie Poindexter and I was born and raised in a rural plantation community in the district of Hamakua on the Big Island of Hawaii. I want to thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2566.

The benefit of licensure to the public can be examined in the access to mental health care services across socio-economic and geographic lines. In the State of Hawaii, the public’s access to mental health care services is severely limited within Medicare, Medicaid and Quest guidelines. Since “licensed” providers are recognized by Medicare, Medicaid and Quest; and “certified” providers are not, it is essential to the public, especially those of limited means, that Mental Health Counselors be licensed.

The importance of access to mental health treatment is best understood through what happens if the public does not have access to mental health services. Work productivity goes down; more people are homeless or in jail; health outcomes for people with heart disease; chronic pain, cancer, etc., go down; and the need for medical care, including hospital admissions, goes up (from information developed by the Coalition for Insurance Parity, January 12, 2000).

Rural communities in the State of Hawaii have always and continues to suffer disproportionately from a shortage of health care services, especially in the mental health profession. In 2002 the National Mental Health Information Center reported that an estimated 148,947 youths in the State of Hawaii, between the ages of 9-17, had serious emotional disturbances. And the numbers only continue to increase because of the shortage of affordable health care services in our rural communities and in our urban communities as well. This alarming number also does not include youths who are homeless or institutionalized.

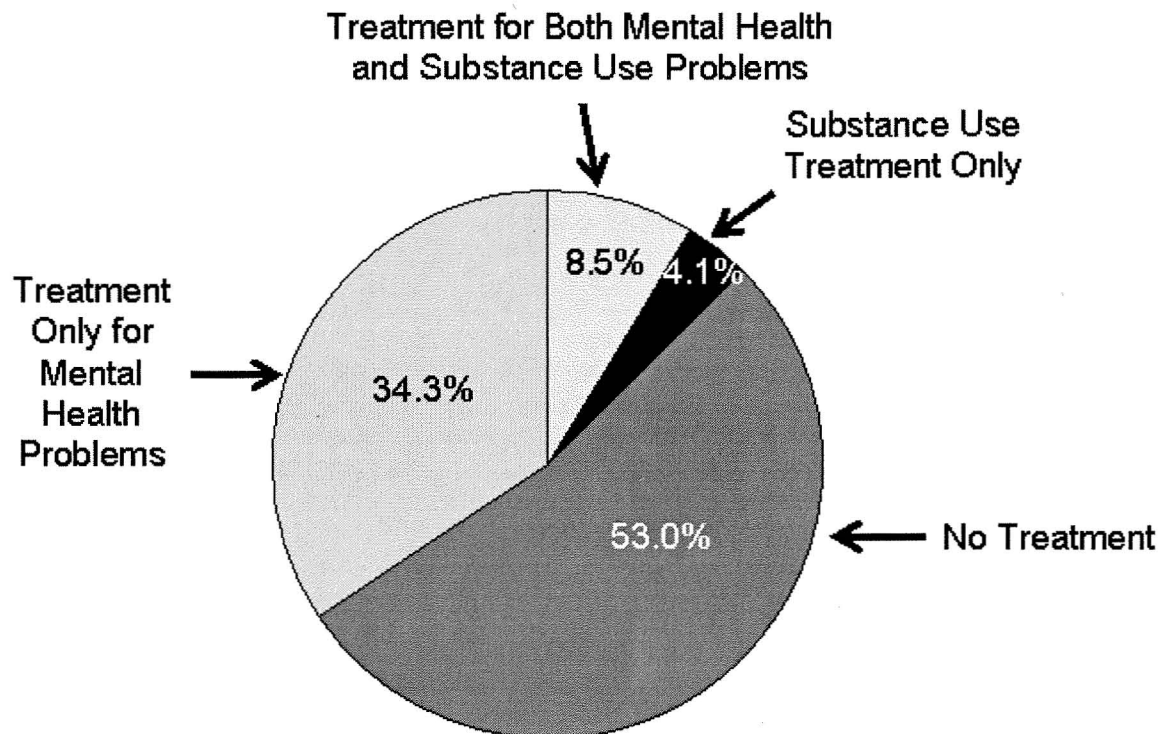
The National Mental Health Information Center also reported in 2002 that an estimated 949,384 adults, 18 years and older, in the State of Hawaii had serious mental illness. This alarming number also does not include adults who are homeless or institutionalized.

Population growth along with persons with mental health problems and co-occurring disorders will be disastrous for the State of Hawaii if they are left untreated. According to the US Census Bureau and in the State of Hawaii, leading the growth in population from 2005 to 2006 was Hawaii County with a growth rate of 2.8 percent, followed by Maui County (+1.2%), Kauai County (+1.0%), and Honolulu County grew the least at 0.6 percent. Please note that these statistics are lower than actual because these are only known reported cases.

Over the past several years, the districts that have seen the fastest population growth are Hamakua, Puna, South Kohala, North Kohala, Kau, and North Kona.

Hawaii County's growth rate has far outpaced that of the state as a whole. Yet health care services in our rural communities still remain to be minimal. To make matters worse, there is no viable public transportation connecting the Puna district with other communities on the Big Island, nor is there any viable public transportation within the district itself. It is the same situation for the Kohala District. Our rural communities are suffering, especially where booming sugar industries made its last mass exodus 12 years ago, in 1996, with nothing to replace it, causing a major upheaval in all aspects of peoples lives, especially their mental health. A majority of people affected have gone untreated for all these years because of the lack of affordable mental health services in their communities.

The State of Hawaii has spent millions of dollars to battle the Crystal Methamphetamine "Ice" Epidemic, however, they failed to recognize the importance of mental health services that were simultaneously needed to fight this battle. A person who has both an alcohol or drug problem and an emotional/psychiatric problem is said to have a co-occurring disorder. To recovery fully, the person needs treatment for both problems. Recent studies show that over half of adults with co-occurring disorders receive no treatment for either disorder. The results from the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health are as follows:



**5.2 Million Adults with Co-Occurring SPD and  
Substance Use Disorder**

*The 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health goes on to say that an estimated 24.6 million American adults, over age 18, reported experiencing "serious psychological distress"<sup>(SPD)</sup> during*

*the preceding year. More than an estimated 30 million adults reported experiencing at least one episode of major depression during their lives.*

*Researchers gathered the information by administering the K6 instrument to respondents as part of the larger survey. The scale consists of six questions about symptoms of emotional distress experienced by respondents during one month in the prior year at a time when they were feeling their worst emotionally.*

*The six items ask about symptoms related to feelings of depression, anxiety, restlessness, and hopelessness and were scored on the basis of their frequency. The scale ranges from 0 to 24 points, and respondents with a score of 13 or higher were classified as experiencing serious psychological distress.*

*Women reported more psychological distress than did men. Additionally, in 2005 adults who used illicit drugs during the previous year were significantly more likely to report serious psychological distress than those who did not use an illicit drug.*

Studies show that in order for our rural and urban communities to receive the necessary affordable mental health services, we need to reduce professional competition. A study entitled: STATE LICENSURE LAWS AND THE MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RURAL MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE was completed in October of 2002 by the Maine Rural Health Research Center, whose mission is to inform health care policymaking and the delivery of rural health services through high quality, policy relevant research, policy analysis and technical assistance on rural health issues of regional and national significance. As indicated in their findings, evidence of the “guild environment” existed in current licensure laws. Licensed professions continue to seek limitations on the scopes of practice for other professions to protect their professional niche. When a profession seeks to secure exclusive rights to a specific practice, they must argue that other professions are not qualified in this area – an argument based on quality, often expressed as years of education. A profession may set extensive requirements for entry into the profession, such as many hours of supervised practice, or requiring a doctorate. Requiring that only members of the profession can supervise, or that a certain number of hours of supervision must be face-to-face, further establishes an explicit “gateway” into the profession, similar to an apprenticeship in a traditional guild. These strategies are rational means of protecting the market for a profession’s services in an environment where there are ample members of multiple professions competing for market share. Please DO NOT allow this type of competition to fester in the State of Hawaii. Stand strong and protect our people and provide them with the necessary health care services that are desperately needed and long overdue. Allow our Licensed Mental Health Counselors to continue the excellent work that they have been providing for the past several years. Do not strip our communities of this benefit.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony and I encourage all of you to support our rural and urban communities and its mental health care needs by passing House Bill 2566 out of the Committee on Health.

**mizuno1-Edgar**

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**From:** Sheriann Daniels [rcioaconsulting@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 06, 2008 9:04 PM  
**To:** HLTtestimony  
**Subject:** Testimony: HB 2566

**DATE:** February 8, 2008

**TO:** The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair, The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Health

**FROM:** **Sheri-Ann Daniels, LMHC, CSAC**

363 Ohaa Street, Kahului HI 96732

**RE:** HB 2566, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**I am testifying in strong support of HB 2566.**

**As a Licensed Mental Health Counselor on Maui, it is important to support this bill as it will allow for the continued availability of LMHC in the neighbor island communities, where there is already a limited number of professionals in the counseling field.**

**LMHC are just as essential to social services and mental health services as are our social worker and other human service**

**professionals in the field as we help people and communities become stronger.**

**The need for LMHC (and other licensed professionals) has increased with the need by various government bodies requiring the licensed professional to provide the services in the community. This is already a challenge in the neighbor island areas where there is already a shortage of advanced degreed individuals.**

I encourage you to pass HB 2566 out of the Committee on Health.

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DATE: February 8, 2008

TO: The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair, The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Health

FROM: Jamal F Wasan, Ph.D, MPA, LMHC, CSAC

RE: HB 2566, Relating to Professions

Aloha Honorable Representative Josh Green, Honorable Representative John Mizuno and Members of the Committee on Health, I sincerely appreciate being given this opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2566.

My name is Jamal Wasan and I am a resident of the Big Island and member of the American Mental Health Counselors Association

As a substance abuse and mental health treatment provider, I have witnessed first hand the concerns of individuals who suffer from co-occurring disorders and their struggle to remain clean and sober. People with mental illnesses are prone to develop problems with alcohol and drug use. They tend to use drugs and alcohol for the same reasons that people without a mental illness do, which makes them more sensitive to the negative effects of alcohol and drugs because it mask their underlying disorders.

The result is that one of every two individuals with severe mental illness has the additional problem of substance use disorder, (which means abuse or dependence related to alcohol or other drugs). Unfortunately, there are many individuals who have co-occurring disorders that are unintentionally overlooked. For example: Anxiety disorders and alcohol dependence co-occur at an alarming rate and often goes unrecognized because of the shortage of Licensed Mental Health providers in substance abuse facilities. A study in the August 2005 issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research* examines what effects a co-existing anxiety disorder may have on relapse following treatment for alcoholism. The results indicated that two of the most common anxiety disorders found among alcoholics – social phobia and panic disorder – are more strongly associated with alcohol relapse than other anxiety disorders. Research clearly shows that the most significant indicator of relapse is the co-occurring disorder that has gone untreated.

I also speak from personal experience as a young marine wounded in Vietnam and who became addicted to pain medications after release from the hospital. When I was honorably discharged at the completion of my enlistment in the United States Marine Corps in 1968, I struggled to stay clean, unaware that my co-occurring symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was not being addressed. It was ambushing me in my struggle. It wasn't until I relapsed in

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1996 and was diagnosed by the Department of Veterans Affairs with suffering from PTSD, related to my tour of duty as a marine rifleman. I was at last allowed to find some relief.

Because of this experience, and a sincere to help others suffering from co-existing disorders, that I was able to be part of establishing the first Integrated Outpatient Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment Facility, fully accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). We, Lokahi Treatment Centers, are able to treat large numbers of co-occurring clients. However, many went without integrated treatment for their co-occurring disorder because of the shortage of Licensed Mental Health Professionals who are able and willing to work with this population. The inclusion of Licensed Mental Health Counselors into this area has been a tremendous asset. These individuals, a number of whom held masters in counseling and certification as substance abuse counselors, are now able to provide integrated services either as private practitioners or as employees of substance abuse facilities. It is proven axiom among health care professionals that knowledge and experience are the keys to successful treatment. Academia provide the knowledge, experience comes from working in the field. By licensing mental health counselors, you have now combined knowledge with experience. I strongly encourage you to pass HB 2566 out of committee, so we can continue using these professionals to provide quality care and give consumers the right to have access to these professionals. The bottom-line is that these services are now more readily available and should not be withdrawn.

**Kristi K. Medeiros**  
**2751 C-1 Booth Road**  
**Honolulu, HI 96813**

DATE: February 8, 2008 – 8:00 a.m.

TO: The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair, The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Health

FROM: **Kristi Medeiros**  
Recent Graduate and New Professional – Mental Health Counselor

RE: HB 2566, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**I am testifying in strong support of HB 2566.**

As a recent graduate of Chaminade's Counseling Psychology program the availability of a professional license became an important aspect of my future plans upon graduation. Upon starting my current job I have begun the long process of securing the necessary requirements to obtain my license in accordance with the current mental health counselor licensure.

I am currently employed at a local social service agency servicing Native Hawaiian families, with the main focus being on the health and welfare of the children of these families and have discovered that access to qualified cost-effective mental health services for low income Native Hawaiian families as well as other low income populations is limited, especially in rural areas. I believe that it is important to have available to these families' quality cost-effective mental health services within these communities.

HB 2566 would help to address the issue of retaining and increasing the availability of Hawaii's licensed mental health professionals through removal of the sunset as it relates to mental health counselor licensure. Access to mental health services is still a serious problem in many parts of our State, particularly in rural areas. Mental health counselors have the professional qualifications to help address this deficit within our community. Making their licensure permanent by removing the sunset clause would enable more of our community to obtain these much-needed quality services in a cost-effective manner.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to pass HB 2566 out of the Committee on Health. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.

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**ALLIANCE FOR PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR LICENSURE**  
(Hawai'i Rehabilitation Counseling Association & Hawai'i Counselors Association)  
1181 Mapuana Street, Kailua, Hawaii, 96734

DATE: February 8, 2008

TO: The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair, The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Vice – Chair and Members of the Committee on Health

FROM: Sandra Joy Eastlack, MSCP, LHMC, NCC

RE: HB 2566, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**I am testifying in strong support of HB 2566.**

The Alliance for Professional Counselor Licensure supports the 177 mental health counselors who have obtained licensure since July 1, 2005; an estimated 100 to 150 counselors currently working on obtaining their licensure status and those working towards their master's degree in counseling. Most importantly we support the consumers of mental health services.

Licensure for mental health counselors ensures the consumer that they are working with a counselor who has demonstrated a standard of expertise through training, experience and examination as well as following stringent ethical guidelines.

There are not a lot of positions that are labeled mental health counselor and mental health counselors in private practice usually do not call themselves that due to the stigma of the title. Few people want to acknowledge they have a mental health issue. However, mental health counselors work in a great variety of settings that includes and is not limited to independent practice, community agencies, managed behavioral health care systems, employee assistance programs, substance abuse treatment centers and schools.

Mental health counselors fulfill a much needed service. The November 29, 2007 edition of the Honolulu Advertiser had an article about depression and the Mental Health Association of Hawaii provided several suggestions one of which was to improve the availability of mental health professionals.

Hawai'i is excellent at providing Med QUEST insurance to those who are low income and can not otherwise afford medical insurance. However, the requirements under Hawaii's Med QUEST program require licensed professionals. Chapter 2.2 of the Medicaid Provider Manual states "An individual provider must be licensed to practice within the scope of his/her profession in accordance with State law." If licensure does not continue for mental health counselors they would not be able to provide services to a substantial portion of the population that includes some of the neediest of these services.

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The statistics I have been able to obtain is that the estimated population of Hawai'i on July 1, 2006 was 1,285,408 and QUEST enrollment as of December 2007 was 201,278. Statewide this is close to 16% of Hawai'i's population. That is substantial as there are numerous studies showing that the indirect costs of lost wages, criminal activities and homelessness are some of the causes of not treating mental illnesses. Those that have Med QUEST often have a difficult time obtaining services as mental health practitioners often limit the number of Med QUEST clients they are willing to serve, due to the lower reimbursement. It is well known that services are even more severely limited in rural areas and that includes all of the state except urban Honolulu.

The other issue that I wish to address is what would happen in a natural disaster. Hawai'i is somewhat isolated and after a natural disaster the first need is naturally that of survival however, shortly thereafter mental health needs will arise and people trained with crisis counseling skills are important. The American Red Cross offers Disaster Training in mental health issues for mental health professionals. However, in order to be trained the professionals must be licensed in the state they live in. I can not help to ask would it not be to Hawai'i's' advantage to have local residents working with their own people?

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide a few, of many reasons, the sunset provision of mental health counselors in HRS 26-H should be repealed.

I encourage you to pass HB 2566 out of the Committee on Health

000190

Wendy Pagador, M.Ed., NCC  
P O Box 17  
Laie, HI 96762  
wendy.pagador@byuh.edu

DATE: February 8, 2008

TO: The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair,  
The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Vice-Chair  
and Members of the Committee on Health

FROM: Wendy Pagador, M.Ed., NCC,  
[wendy.pagador@byuh.edu](mailto:wendy.pagador@byuh.edu), Ph: 808 675 3518

RE: HB 2566, Relating to Professions

I am testifying in strong support of HB 2566.

I believe it is very important to continue the Mental Health Counselors Licensure Law in Hawaii. I live on the North Shore and plan to pursue licensure and serve the population here, and particularly want to be available to women who prefer female counselors. The Licensure law pushes me and others to pursue continuing education and provide a quality service. It is important for those seeking help know they have rights and can expect a certain standard, as we all want in the professional services that each of us use.

Requiring counselors to be licensed will enable those to get help who may not before have been able, because third paying parties will know the level of service being provided by counselors. I believe many here, including homeless and some cultures who are less familiar with the counseling, would benefit from professional help but do not get it because they just don't know where to go, or if they do, are unable to travel or to pay for it. This law I believe would increase the amount of qualified counselors available to these populations on this side of the island and at the same time open up education to the public about counseling and help available. Furthermore, those seeking help would be able to get it more urgently, which is often required. Hopefully, with the increase in counseling available we could help before it gets to the point of urgency, by working with those who do not know how to deal with their anger, pain and other mental health issues that often escalate into dangerous situations for themselves and others.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

I encourage you to pass HB 2566 out of the Committee on Health

Sincerely,

W. Pagador

000191

**mizuno1-Edgar**

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**From:** Joanne Sameshima [star@turquoise.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 07, 2008 8:05 AM  
**To:** HLTtestimony  
**Subject:** HB 2566, Relating to Professions

Date: February 7, 2008

To: The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair,  
The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Vice-Chair and  
Members of the Committee on Health

From: Joanne Sameshima, LMHC  
Kamuela, Hawaii

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am  
humbly testifying in strong support of HB 2566.

My counseling focus is working and supporting our  
Island's children and families. Working with children,  
ranges from pre-schoolers, adolescents and teens.

Working with our disadvantaged families as they face  
financial strains particularly in our road to a recession,  
provokes, stress on families, violence, and abuse on  
the children. Because of the families financial restraints,  
in spite of working two or three jobs, seeking professional  
services often is frustrating because of having to be  
turned away due to the constraints upon myself and  
colleagues with the expertise of mental health counseling and not able to accept their Medicaid or Medicare  
insurance.

Recently, there has been more discussions regarding  
the suicide rate in our State of our youth. This is the  
second leading cause of death for our Hawaii residents  
age 15 to 34. Suicide is preventable and youth can be helped, it is just finding the help, being pro-active as a  
group and being available to accept referrals from crisis worker,  
social workers and the Department of Human Service.

Another concern for our State is making available Licensed  
Mental Health Counselors to our Troops returning from  
Iraq. We need to be prepared to offer our professional  
counseling to our young veterans returning from war and  
to help deal with any trauma that they now will be  
experiencing. We need to be made available to accept their  
requests for counseling and to be able to accept their health insurance .

Your consideration is much appreciated.

I strongly ask for the passage of HB 2566.

I, along with my colleagues look forward to a most  
positive outcome.

000192

2/7/2008

Lois Smith, BSW  
68-1777 Mikohu Place  
Waikoloa, Hawaii 96738  
(808) 854-1097

February 7, 2008

To: The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair,  
The Honorable Representative John Mizuno, Vice-Chair  
Members of the Committee of Health

From: Lois Smith, BSW, Social worker with the State of Hawaii Department of Human  
Services, West Hawaii Child Welfare Services (DHS/CWS).  
[Direct line 808-327-6285].

RE: HB 2566, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**I am testifying in strong support of HB 2566.**

I have worked for West Hawaii Child Welfare services for over six years as an assessment /case manager. I can speak to the difficulty that was experienced by DHS/CWS in finding qualified mental health professionals to work with our children and their families who are in the greatest need. This difficulty is due to the current constraints on mental health professionals who have the credentials/ expertise to provide counseling services to our children and their families, but are not able to accept their Medicaid or Medicare insurance policies. This situation has created gaps in service for our children/families, and prolonged the family's engagement with DHS/CWS unnecessarily, as they may go on a waiting list for mental health providers who are booked to the maximum, and may take months before they have openings to service the next family.

DHS/CWS works with children and their families that are already stressed, frustrated and under financial strain while working two or three jobs to support the family, yet faced with another restraint by not being able to access mental health services due to the States current restrictions on the mental health profession. Please help close these gaps in services to our Hawaiian communities by supporting HB 2566.

Respectfully,  
Lois Smith, BSW

000193

Frances M. Zucco, LMHC, LPCC, NCC  
Castle Professional Center  
46-001 Kamehameha Highway, Suite 419 B  
Kaneohe, HI 96744

DATE: February 8, 2008

TO: The Honorable Representative Josh Green, Chair, The Honorable  
Representative John Mizuno, Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee on  
Health

From: Fran Zucco, LMHC  
330-6294  
[franzucco@hotmail.com](mailto:franzucco@hotmail.com)

RE: HV 2566, Relating to Professions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am testifying in strong support of HB 2566.

I am a therapist in Private Practice as well as a full time employee of a non-profit agency on our island of Oahu. I have lived in Hawaii for the past ten (10) years and have seen the mental health needs of Hawaii's indigent, homeless, rural population, and active duty military go unmet due to the shortage of properly educated and licensed professionals. Those in Hawaii already practicing with a LCSW, PhD, and MFT license are doing great work with these populations, but there are just not enough of them to service everyone. Many have waiting lists or no longer except Quest behavioral plans. Which leaves the mental health needs go untreated.

Times have changed. The Ice Epidemic and the War in Iraq have shaped our community in astounding ways. It has increased violence in our homes, leaves our families neglected or split, and our spirits broken. Mental Health counselors like myself have been educated, trained, and supervised to provide positive, strength based, and innovative short term therapies for a variety of social and emotional issues. We have been providing these services and treatments as a licensed provider for the past three (3) years and the need is there to continue. Since licensed I have successfully helped over a hundred (100) families, both in private practice and in non-profit work, become healthier and live happier in some way or another. I am not alone. There are currently 170 plus Licensed Mental Health Counselors in the state of Hawaii. Imagine the number of people that have gotten help, assistance, support, and therapy and imagine the number of people that wouldn't if this bill does not go through. Astounding!!

I encourage you to pass HB 2566 out of the Committee on Health.

Thank You,

Fran Zucco, LMHC, LPCC, NCC

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